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ABSTRACT

Emphasizing the importance of developing a social classroom climate, this book addresses the organization of the reading/writing classroom. Nine sections: (1) present a statement of principles based on this concept of classroom organization (J. Steinle); (2) discuss scheduling the school day as an important area of teacher planning (P. Sloan and D. Whitehead); (3) suggest ways of managing classroom resources and space to create conditions similar to those in which children master oral language (H. Brown); (4) discuss the theoretical and practical bases for providing personalized learning for all children through appropriate grouping techniques (L. Unsworth); (5) suggest some desirable outcomes of a teacher's contract with a learner, and outline the history of and rationale for contracting (A. Fleet); (6) describe cooperative classroom learning activities that involve peer tutoring (Knox Grammar School staff members); (7) address the issue of parents as home tutors of literature, citing results from recent naturalistic research supporting the notion (M. Kemp); (8) define team teaching, describe its benefits, present a number of case studies, and provide practical guidelines for implementing it (M. Mannison); and (9) focus on the use of teacher-made learning centers as a means of fostering independent learning while providing stimulating whole language activities (L. Unsworth). (JD)

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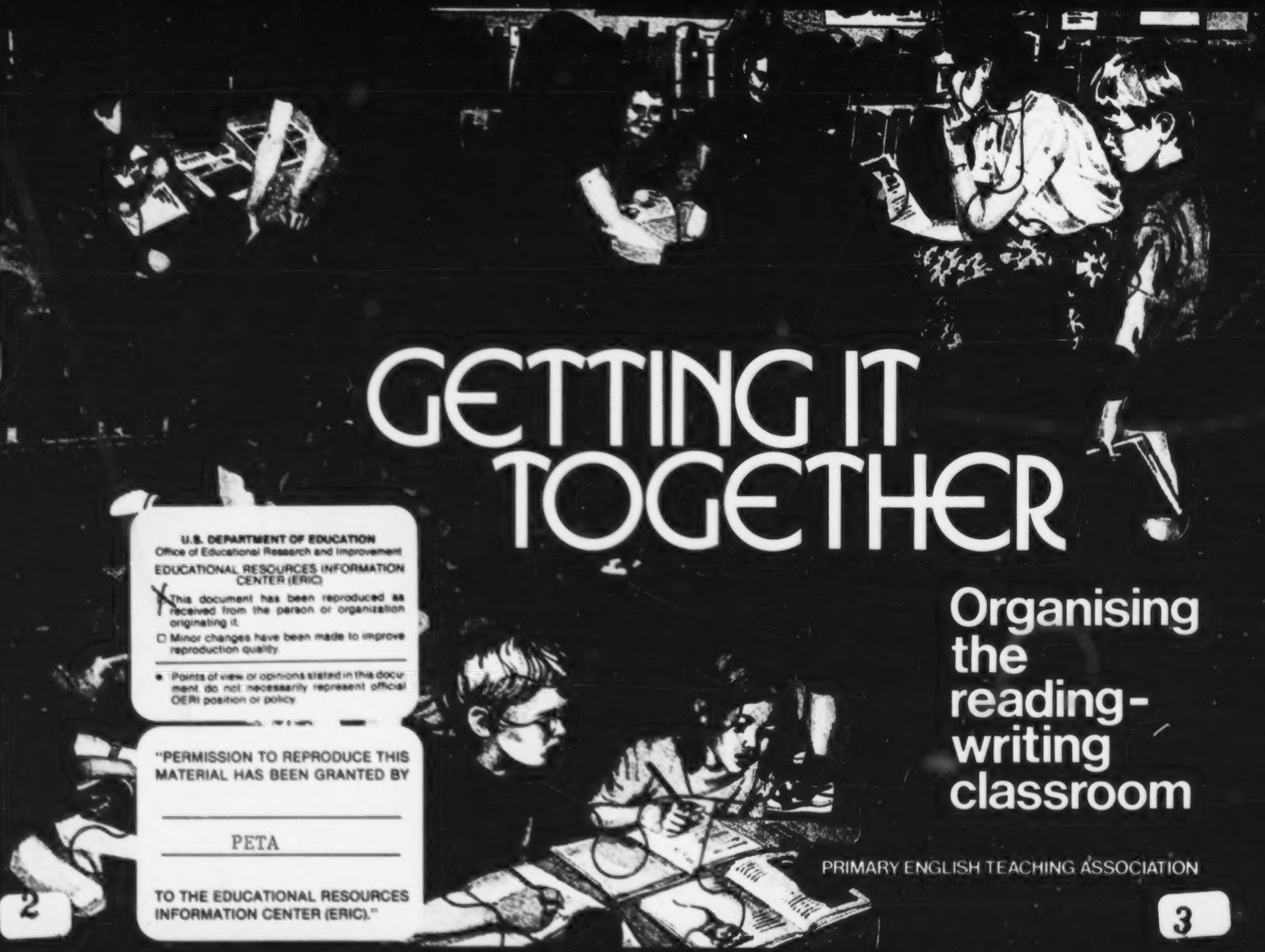

GETTING IT TOGETHER

Organising the reading-writing classroom

PRIMARY ENGLISH TEACHING ASSOCIATION

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Getting It Together

Organising the Reading-Writing Classroom

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Contents

Statement of Principles 1
John Steinle

Scheduling the Classroom Day 5
Peter Sloan & David Whitehead

Organising Space and Materials 21
Hazel Brown

Grouping for Personalised Classroom Learning ... 31
Len Unsworth

Contracting 49
Alma Fleet

Peer Tutoring 65
Staff at Knox Grammar School

Parents, Teachers, Children and the Literacy Curriculum 77
Max Kemp

Team Teaching 87
Mary Mannison

Learning Centres and Literacy Development 101
Len Unsworth

Index 120

Statement of Principles

JOHN STEINLE

Director-General of Education
South Australia

SOMEWHERE IN THE CLUTTER OF MY MIND is a story I read about an incident at Winnetka when Carlton Washburn was introducing the idea of individual progression. A teacher in her last year of dedicated service was toiling away, long after the school day had finished, preparing the enormous amount of material that was required for her next day's lessons. Washburn entered the room and was appalled to see her, weary and wet-eyed. His immediate reaction was to take the pen from her hand and to send her home with the injunction that she was to disregard all his requests about individual instruction. She had taught long and successfully in the conventional mode and it was no time for her to change her style in the twilight of her career.

I am not sure if the facts are correct but the story does serve to make the point that teaching is an art and not a science and that it is an intensely personal matter. It is about people influencing the development of other people in a manner which is enjoyable and comfortable to both. There is no one single formula for doing it.

Those of us who are at the beginning of our careers have to develop that art and to do so we need to understand and, if possible, to try as many models as we can to assist us ultimately to develop our own style. Libraries have been filled with tomes on pedagogy which advocate particular styles of teaching, while endless enquiries and massive reports have been undertaken on the subject, but the ultimate choice must rest with each individual teacher.

Needless to say, *how* teachers teach has been influenced by *why* they teach. Schooling, and subsequently compulsory schooling, arose for a variety of reasons, from the need to be familiar with the Bible, to the demands for particular skills generated by the Industrial Revolution. After two hundred years the vocational purpose remains, but the purposes of schools have widened enormously so that now schools aim to prepare children for all aspects of life. This model sees schools as places where children are not only trained but assisted to grow intellectually, physically, socially and emotionally.

Accompanying these developments have been diverse approaches to child nurture. Simply put, on the one hand there are those who see children as little devils, born of fallen man, who need to be tamed by firm discipline, corporal punishment and rewards. On the other is the view that in reality they are little angels who need to be protected from the forces of darkness and treated with loving care so that they will develop into the enlightened adults that destiny meant them to become.

The evolution of secondary schools inevitably had an effect on primary schools and for some they became simply a preparatory stage for secondary education—and indeed are still called "preparatory" or elementary schools in some places. This development reinforced the two philosophies of primary education. The quest for secondary education, often through the avenue of scholarships, and quest for "places" in secondary schools, reinforced the emphasis upon rote learning and training. On the other hand, the critics of this approach turned with even greater enthusiasm towards the more informal growth models and the progressive movement developed.

Both approaches formed their advocates among theorists, psychologists, philosophers and practitioners.

The emphasis of the two approaches on the need for motivation meant that some developments found favour with both schools of thought, even though the method of encouraging that motivation differed. Both stressed the advantages of individual learning and teaching, although again the methods differed. Finally, the development of new technologies has provided all teachers with new strategies, whether they approach teaching through formal methods or flexible approaches.

How are teachers to choose the best approach to their task? For the first half of this century teachers' choice was limited. For the most part they looked backwards or upwards for ideas. They tended to look back to their own teachers, their own schooling, to those who trained them, or upwards to those higher in the controlling educational hierarchies. This tendency was reinforced because the content of what was taught changed slowly. Not only could older children pass their books on to their younger brothers and sisters and assist them with their homework but mothers and fathers could frequently do the same.

Furthermore, teachers and pupils were tightly constrained in *what* was taught, *how* it was taught and indeed even *when* it was taught. The rule for teachers and pupils was: "Here is what should be taught and learned, here is how you do it. Do it and you will receive a mark out of ten. Those who do it best will be rewarded with a stamp of approval."

The 1950s and 1960s saw the arrival of a new era based upon educational research. After all, this was the age of research in science which promised new solutions to old problems. Why should it not apply to education? The high hopes were fed by the burgeoning new research centres in the mushrooming tertiary institutions across the country. But again these new sources of answers were found wanting.

During these years the bureaucracies, too, examined themselves and sought to assist teachers in different ways from the hierarchical approaches which had been used for so long. Now younger people, variously called "consultants" or "advisers", who were essentially outstanding teachers taken out of classrooms for a limited period, were given the task of assisting their colleagues. They did this by demonstrating their own techniques, drawing on conventional wisdom and educational research, and influencing not only the classroom practice of individuals but also curriculum and classroom design. They also arranged in-service conferences aimed at the true professional development of teachers.

It was these people who demonstrated in a very practical way that the professional development of teachers should not be left to any one source. Rather, the successful development of teachers is multi-faceted and requires a pooling of knowledge from many sources.

It was the advisory teachers, too, who brought home to their colleagues the fact that not only should they devise a style which was comfortable for them, but that they should critically examine a vast range of approaches and techniques in order to discover a teaching style which suited them. Professional development programs were planned to provide opportunities for the study of current theories and research and innovative practices. The experience could then be applied to individual classrooms. Teachers increasingly took advantage of opportunities to observe other successful teachers and also children, in order to understand them singly and in groups, to understand their own strengths and weaknesses, and finally to understand what primary education is endeavouring to do for children. This supplemented the undergraduate studies which provided the knowledge and skills necessary to enter the field and to provide a base for future learning.

Obviously such observation does not need to be conducted at first hand. As with all learning this can be done by books and films and discussion. In the case of observing children, however, nothing surpasses the opportunities presented to a vigilant and observant teacher who is supervising children at play in the school yard, or on school camps, as well as in the classroom.

Understanding oneself is perhaps the most difficult thing to do. This requires honesty, a willingness to seek and heed criticism and to be prepared to change one's attitudes and practices. Certainly the task is made easier in the presence of competent and perceptive colleagues and by reading the thoughts of great thinkers and practitioners. Can teachers read Vickers Bell's book *On Learning the English Tongue* without being stirred to improve their story telling skills? One of the pleasing aspects of this kind of self examination is the discovery of skills and abilities in oneself. How often do people who are shy and withdrawn with adults find that they have great skills in communicating with children?

An essential part of the process of developing a teaching style is to develop a social classroom organisation. This necessarily reflects the wide range of approaches we have seen already. There are those who prefer the flexible, open approach which allows for and even encourages educational serendipity. There are others who choose the rigorous, highly structured approach, with its emphasis upon predictability and formality. Even more teachers choose a position in the middle and endeavour to provide opportunities to take advantages of both approaches to meet the needs of the moment.

Both approaches have their adherents who defend their practices with missionary zeal, and both can work well if they are genuine, consistent and in keeping with the general milieu of the school. It is important therefore not only to explain one's position to colleagues, parents and children but also to accept that others may not agree with the style.

Thus, while we have examined the dichotomies in primary education, we have recognised the areas of agreement between the various groups who espouse different approaches to the teaching of children. These agreed practices are both numerous and important. They are especially significant in the matter of

classroom organisation.

The first is that it is essential for teachers to **plan with care** what they should teach. This is particularly important in regard to the more flexible approaches to teaching. Indeed it can be argued that the more flexible and informal the style which a teacher adopts, then the greater the need for the teacher to prepare and plan the activities for the year, the term, the week, the day, and the lesson. Such planning must of course result in some form of classroom organisation to ensure that the plans are implemented. This involves mechanical matters such as seating, the provision of materials, and some record of what each child has attempted, what has been achieved and what needs to be done in the future.

All teachers would agree, too, that pupils need to feel a sense of personal ownership of what they are learning and being taught and that they need to have a sense of responsibility for it. This can be encouraged by various modes of **grouping** pupils, by **contracting**, by **peer tutoring** and by involving them in making decisions about what is learnt.

Few argue, too, that **parents** are the critical figures in any child's life. Schools which lose sight of this do so at the peril of those who are taught. Consequently, educational programs ought to build in a parental presence and involvement, which can be expressed both inside and outside the school. This can be achieved in many ways, but increasing emphasis is being placed upon the importance of parents working with teachers in classrooms, as well as at home, especially in the teaching of reading.

The advantages of such working arrangements are manifold, not only in practical terms but also in helping teachers and parents to see the differing emphases that have been discussed. Each needs to know the views of the other and to be willing to discuss their differences, over such simple matters as that of noise levels. If a teacher believes, as most do, that classroom noise is neither a good nor bad thing in itself, but rather an inevitable result of the activity in hand, then this should be discussed with parents. Needless to say, such discussions are even more important in matters such as testing, corporal punishment, detention and discussions of controversial topics.

Thus, when a teacher has decided upon the style of teaching which works best for him or her, he or she needs to set it in the context of **the school and the community**. This requires patience, understanding and a willingness to discuss objectives and teaching style. Successful teachers will recognise the nucleus of the school and the community as a part of the raw material with which they have to work and upon which they can build.

By way of conclusion, I would therefore make these four points:

- ***The art of teaching has a purpose to it, which is linked with the approaches chosen, whether they be based upon the more traditional, or the more flexible, or somewhere in between.***
- ***Each individual's style will be based on the experiences gained from teaching different students and different classes at different places and times. It will incorporate the children's experiences and those of their parents.***
- ***The crafts of teaching will be gleaned from different experiences again, and will show the skilled used of the artists' tools, developed by the individual into his or her own unique style.***
- ***The teacher as an artist will weave together all those things which are available, some old, some new, to craft his or her classroom into an organised, working, piece of educational art.***

Or as Lucius Seneca (4BC?-65AD) put it so simply:

"While we teach we learn".

Scheduling the Classroom Day

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In this chapter, scheduling the school day is presented as an important area of teacher planning, which requires decisions to be made according to a number of interacting variables. Stress is laid on devising schedules which allow the children to develop independence in learning and to take responsibility for some or most of the activities which they will encounter. Independence and responsibility are major skills in successful development, but they are not achieved quickly, nor will they be achieved totally in the primary school. Teachers must be prepared to accept approximations towards these goals and to provide the models needed to gain the insights required. Without the opportunity to apply these skills in the learning situation at every level of the school they will not be learned at all.

The various ways of scheduling the day presented in this chapter have been selected because they are flexible enough to allow the teacher to achieve the delicate balance between teacher guidance and children's independence and responsibility, which maximises and characterises effective learning. Although a child centred approach is emphasised, it is conceded that a totally child centred approach is not always workable, nor desirable. The skilful teacher is the teacher who can make learning appear to be learner directed and who can provide experiences in independence and responsibility.

The schedules discussed and presented here are aimed at facilitating the development of an active, positive and purposeful classroom experience for both learner and teacher.

THE WAY THE DAY IS SCHEDULED has a significant influence on the effectiveness of the learning experiences which take place in a classroom. Despite this, attention to the various factors which operate in selecting what experiences go in a particular slot within the day is often minimal. In many schools the arrangement of the timetable, usually at the weekly level, is not a matter for individual teacher involvement, despite the fact that it is the teachers who have to make the daily schedule work. As a result, what happens during the day is determined by administrative expediency, rather than educationally sound principles. Teachers are, or should be, the most informed people about the needs, strengths, weaknesses and development of the children they teach. The way the classroom day is organised can facilitate growth in learning, and the development of the child's responsibility for his or her own learning, or it can effectively minimise development and reduce classroom learning to a monotonous experience, where there is no provision for individual differences in learning styles or rates. In such circumstances there is no provision for the interactions, social and cognitive, which underpin learning, and no opportunity to experience the integrative aspects of knowledge. As a consequence of monotonous schedules, process becomes subservient to content, and classrooms become too teacher centred, rather than child centred.

Another development which in recent times has had a major influence on the flexibility of the classroom teacher to organise more meaningful time arrangements is that of the specialist primary teacher. The growing trend towards specialisation has meant that many teachers have lost control of the total program and, therefore, when and how some components are taught. The separation of aspects of the classroom program from the classroom teacher's control not only mitigates against integration in areas such as language (with drama, speech and reading specialists) but also in curriculum areas such as music, science, art and physical education, where specialisation is well established. As a consequence, in many schools where the specialist is used as the only teacher who teaches a particular curriculum area (rather than as a specialist resource person to train and support the classroom teacher), the classroom teacher can have major disruptions to the daily schedule. The effective arrangement of the day's activities in this situation is minimised by the coming and going of children to specialist teachers, leaving the classroom teacher without the opportunity to block time or vary the program according to the needs of the children.

The separation of some of the curriculum areas from others means that the classroom teacher does not have the same opportunities to vary the activities in a learning sequence, and thus provide for on-task motivation through changing learning situations. Furthermore, the selection of curriculum areas, for example drama, for specialist teaching reflects a lack of understanding about the role of drama in schools. Drama can be used as a means of having children explore space and understand themselves, and also as a performance activity (plays etc.) but it also has a major role in learning. Drama in education is a means of learning and a way of thinking. This most important feature of drama (and also of music, science and art) cannot take place if it is separated from the other curriculum areas by being allocated to specialists, if those specialists are not involved in the total program.

Criteria for designing the daily schedule

A number of factors has to be considered when scheduling the classroom day. These factors are a set of design criteria which act as a sense of values for decision making about what is relevant and which activities best precede or follow other activities. Whilst local conditions will create quite specific criteria related to special circumstances, the following general factors have been found to be relevant to most circumstances, and the daily classroom schedule should reflect them.

Learning principles

The scheduling of the classroom day must take into account the principles of learning, i.e. those factors which maximise the acquisition and retention of information. If the daily schedule does not accord with these principles which underpin all learning, little or no learning will result. These principles are briefly stated in the following section of this chapter.

(a) *Attention*

Without the learner attending, learning cannot take place. Only when the learner is alert and focused on the task can learning begin. Sometimes attention to the learning experiences, by the learners, is minimised by how long they have been required to attend to one task, and the type of attention required, e.g. visual concentration, listening concentration etc.

It is easier to acquire information and to retain it longer when attention is maximised.

Scheduling the classroom day must take into account the importance of attention as a major factor in effective learning.

Implications

Attention span varies with age. The attention span of younger children is significantly lower than that of older children. Therefore the time spent *attending* in any one mode (e.g. listening, observing, doing) must take the attention span of children into account.

Thus, it is suggested that teachers vary the kinds of activities in a learning experience, according to the ages of the children and the nature of the task. The following figure (Figure 1) provides a summary of the generally accepted functional attention spans at three levels of the primary school.

It is important to ensure that learning activities (e.g., discovery, instruction and application) are not prolonged beyond the attention span limits. One way to overcome the attention span variable is to adopt a cyclic approach to the scheduling of activities. In Years 1-3, for example, nine to twelve minutes of exploratory work with concrete materials may be followed by up to twelve minutes of instruction (discussion, demonstration etc.) and then up to twelve minutes of application. Activities will increase the children's attention to the task.

Attention span in minutes	YEAR LEVELS		
	1-3	4-6	7-9
Low	5-9	10-14	15-30
High	8-12	13-24	25-40

Figure 1. Average Attention Span in Primary School Children. *(After* Gagne 1976)

(b) *Meaningfulness*

If what is to be learned is not meaningful (i.e., sensible *and* relative to the learner), he/she cannot learn. The acquisition and retention of information is facilitated if what is to be learned is meaningful. Generally this means that the item to be learned must relate to the previous experiences of the learner. Often, in the primary school, this means relating the new learning to concrete sensory experiences (i.e., looking, hearing, tasting, seeing, touching and smelling).

Implications

Ensuring that new learning is meaningful requires reasonable periods of time. Since it is no use teaching without meaning, consideration must be given in scheduling the day to provide blocks of time sufficient for these meaningful links to be made. The following suggestions for increasing meaningfulness in learning situations have implications for how daily schedules are arranged.

1. Provide as much real experience as possible through trips, visitors to the classroom, active doing, play and simulated situations.
2. Ensure that "follow-up" lessons or sequences are not too far removed in time from the previous related learning experiences. For example, an activity on a theme should follow the previous activity, with not more than one day between them.
3. Master techniques for quickly reviewing previous learning, and for occasionally reinforcing learning, once a sequence is completed.
4. Begin as many learning sequences as possible with discovery situations.

Thus, in scheduling the day in those curriculum areas where new information is to be introduced, more time should be allocated to cater for discovery learning. This means that daily schedules will vary from time to time to meet the experience requirements in differing areas and for different themes.

(c) *Vividness*

Learning is made easier and that which is learned is retained longer when what is being learned is vivid. Vividness refers to the impactful nature of the material. Dramatic methods and media applications bring vividness to learning experiences.

Implications

The use of dramatic experiences and the use of media (e.g., video, films and sound tapes) often require the use of equipment which generally must be shared and therefore restricted times for usage may apply. In addition, these experiences should not become long periods of concentration, but kept short and relevant. Preparation for participation or viewing is essential, as is the follow-up of the experience through discussion and other activities.

(d) *Involvement*

Acquisition and retention in learning are greatly increased if the learner is involved in direct ways. Although active doing increases learning, much learning in schools can only be described as passive. The provision of abundant opportunities to discover and apply concepts through learner-centred activities is essential.

Implications

The arrangement of activities requires careful scheduling of time. Children who are gaining confidence in taking responsibility for their own learning will need generous allocations of time for completing the tasks they have undertaken, and for the discussion and "conferencing" required in order to explore the boundaries of their own decision making. That is to say, mastering the content is only one aspect of learning. Learning the personal processes, controls and planning strategies required to learn, is the other. Child centred responsibility and decision-making learning environments will require more time in the initial stages until the children can make their independence productive.

(e) *Practice*

Without practice, learning becomes shallow and what is learned is soon forgotten. Practice in one form or another must take a major portion of the day. It has long been established that short frequent practice sessions are better than long ("massed") practice sessions held less frequently.

Implication

The scheduling of the classroom day must make provision for the frequent practice of new learning to be undertaken.

Other principles and conditions

The above principles of learning provide the basic rationale for decision-making regarding scheduling of the classroom day. There are, however, other important considerations which must be taken into account and, in scheduling the classroom day, the teacher must make provision for them.

(a) *Classroom climate*

The daily schedule must foster a happy, business-like and positive climate in which both the children and the teacher can feel comfortable. The work-day of children and teachers can become quite stressful if too much is demanded or impossible deadlines are set for the completion of work.

The classroom effective environment is made more positive through a flexible time schedule which caters for emergent needs and provides for the juxtapositioning of "light" and "heavy" periods of involvement, application and practice.

(b) *Learning rates and learning styles*

Not all children learn at the same rate, nor do they learn in the same way. Learning rate is governed by many variables such as age, prior experience, intelligence, self-concept, as well as the nature and demand of the task. Learning rates change from activity to activity and are greatly influenced by the learner's attitude towards the task. Learning styles vary in the same way. After a few weeks at school, children get into routines which they find effective. The scheduling of the day must provide for a variety of teaching styles to be used by the teacher, as a means of meeting the differing needs of the children in this dimension.

(c) *Nature of the class*

Consideration must be given to the nature of the class when drawing up daily classroom schedules. Schedules for younger children must reflect the active nature of younger children and their limited capacity to gain and retain large amounts of information in a short time period. Much care must be taken at the lower levels to avoid fatigue, which comes easily if the learning modes are not varied frequently (see ***Attention*** above).

The *socio-cultural background* of the class is important in many ways, for it influences the effective selection of learning activities, the background knowledge of the learner and the attitudes of the learner towards what is being learned. As a result, some activities will require a longer time in one class than they will in another. In some classrooms much more social learning is required as a pre-requisite to more formal learning. Time allocations are thereby significantly affected.

(d) *Independent work*

All children need to develop independence as learners. A major goal of the teacher from the very beginning of school must be to work towards making the children independent. Not enough attention was given to this goal in the past. Independence comes from understanding the processes, i.e. having the strategies for learning internalised and from having a major responsibility for the learning experiences.

Learners cannot become independent learners/thinkers without the chances needed to develop that independence. Children's growing into independence requires teachers to be less concerned with the drilling of content knowledge. Teachers need to be flexible enough to facilitate the children's attempts and to accept their approximations towards a goal, as they occur.

In terms of scheduling the classroom day, a teacher who is fostering children's independence will arrange a quite different sequence of activities and time allocations from the teacher whose sole purpose is the learning and retention of knowledge (the "facts").

(e) *Whole class and group teaching*

Although much has been said in support of independent opportunities within the day, there are also advantages in having whole class activities where across-the-class thinking may occur, and where some performance and practice situations may be better served by having others to relate to and to share in the learning. In the hands of a skilful teacher, there is much that can be done with the whole class involved in an activity. For example, *Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading* (USSR), which has very desirable outcomes, provides much needed practice in reading and fosters independence, is best done with the whole class. Only in the whole class (or larger grouping) can the modelling which underlies this strategy's power be utilised.

Group teaching is also a useful experience for children. Specific reading, writing and discussion strategies that are group-based are excellent for developing thinking, as well as co-operative learning.

Thus, the daily classroom schedule should provide whole class, group and independent/individual opportunities for learning. As with the learning activities, the time spent in any one of these conditions should not exceed the attention span limits. A learning diet consisting of a mixture of all three formats is one that promotes healthy development.

(f) *Resources*

Often the availability of resources is a determiner of what can be done and when. In reality, this is probably unavoidable. Fortunately for those teachers whose aim is developing the underlying processes of listening, speaking, reading and writing, their dependence on resources is not as great as those teachers whose prime purpose is content and teacher-centred methods. Nevertheless, the daily schedule will need to reflect the availability of school resources (where these are shared).

(g) *Conferencing*

Of all the teacher's responsibilities, none can be more important than that of providing opportunities for individual children to be "conferenced". A few minutes of individual consultation with the teacher are worth more than hours of general classroom instruction. Only by "conferencing" can truly specific help be given to children. A major consideration in daily scheduling must therefore be the provision of conferencing opportunities.

(h) *Balance*

The school day must have *balance* between hard and easy tasks; new and familiar tasks; class, group and individual work; and instruction, application and practice. In addition, there must be consideration of the fact that the placement of one experience, in relation to another, can either facilitate or inhibit learning. For example, in a concentrated period of learning new concepts in mathematics, followed by one in language, the learning of the mathematics may inhibit the learning of the language sequence because the learner is presented with too much in terms of new concepts in a short time. That is, concepts which are still being processed in one area may prevent the acquisition of concepts in another.

This situation may be reversed also. In some situations, the earlier or later learning may facilitate the learning of concepts in a subject area by reinforcing that learning (e.g. mathematics and science).

Generally speaking, inhibiting conditions may be avoided by mixing the formal areas such as mathematics, language and social science with music, physical education, art and games, which have no similarity in content demands.

Meeting the criteria

The criteria discussed in this section may seem to be impossible to meet but, in the actual creation of the daily schedule, many of the criteria may be met without too much difficulty. Some of the criteria presented above are, however, more difficult to reconcile in every respect. Generally, the criteria discussed here are best catered for in open, flexible arrangements. In the following section, various approaches to scheduling the classroom day will be presented and discussed, with these established criteria in mind.

Approaches to scheduling the day

There are many approaches to the effective use of time in the classroom day. The scheduling of any one day in the classroom must be seen in context because few teachers consider only one day in isolation. Thus is it appropriate to look at the scheduling of classroom activities over a number of days, although our concern here is with the daily schedule.

In some of the examples which follow, weekly schedules are presented because they allow a better appreciation of how the criteria can be met using larger blocks of time and the juxtaposition of components, some of which would not occur daily.

(a) *Contract approaches*

The most open and flexible approach to scheduling the day is the **contract** approach. The contract approach requires the child and the teacher to enter into an agreement about what work will be completed and when. The contract is usually formulated in some way, the most general way being the construction of a timetable indicating the content being covered and the time. Such a contract can be made between an individual child and the teacher, or a group of children and the teacher.

Advantages

The advantage of the contract approach is that it makes provision for:

- individual rates and styles of learning;
- a great deal of learner responsibility for deciding the what and when of the curriculum;
- independent work (i.e. since every contract may be different);
- children working at different levels, without the differences being too apparent;
- time for conferencing (specific times for conferencing may be built into the contract).

In addition, one of the main benefits of this approach is the positive attitude of most children towards this kind of scheduling. When first setting up a contract system, teachers are advised to begin slowly by making only some areas of the curriculum open to contract. In addition, teachers need to train, guide and help the children to develop a contract.

Because children will need guidance, some teachers have found it more appropriate to begin with **group contracts.** In this application, the class is divided into groups of six (six is the best operational size) and, each day or at the beginning of the week, the group plans its activities and work for the contractable areas of the curriculum.

To assist children, teachers should write, on the blackboard, the areas to be covered in the week, so that the groups will know the actual content to be covered and be able to glance through it in order to plan their schedule. In doing this, the teacher can also indicate fixed times when he/she wishes to work with the whole class and when a group must have a conference about a topic. The following example (Figure 2) illustrates a teacher's listing of content, from which each group formulates its own schedule. (Note: The same principles apply to individual contracts.)

Contract Work to be Scheduled

Contract Work for Monday 1 July

Mathematics (Max. 45 mins.)	— Text examples, pages 16-23. — Activities 4 & 7, resource kit. — 10 minute teacher conference.
Language (Max. 1.5 hrs.)	— Drafting a short story — conference with partner. — Spelling from individual lists — partner to test. — Reading of own choice of a short story — hand up for help.
Physical Education	— 10-10:20 a.m. all class on front court with teacher.

Figure 2. Teacher's Specifications for Group or Individual Contract Scheduling

Disadvantages

The disadvantages of contract approaches may include the following:

- the tendency for contract approaches to become almost totally book or worksheet centred;
- the difficulty of providing all the help needed in the classes where there has been little previous independent work;
- they work better in upper grades, e.g. Year 3 and above.

Figure 3 is an example of a contract between a child or group of children and the teacher. Note the areas contracted should be quite specific if the contract is to work.

Contract between............(student) and Mr. J. Brown (teacher).

Day: Monday **Date: 1st July** **Class: Year 5**

9	**Language**	1. Complete short story.
—		2. Conference with partner.
—		3. Reading **The Iron Man,** by Ted Hughes.
—		Phys. Ed. with rest of class.
10		Personal spelling list — partner test.
—		
	RECESS	
11		4. Reading, continued.
—	**Maths.**	Maths. activities 4-7, examples p.16-23. Teacher Conference when needed.
—		
12		
	LUNCH RECESS	
1	**Contracts**	Individual projects — Library. Animal environments in Australia. Preparation of a report — 1st draft.
—		
—		
—		
2		Music with rest of class.
—		
—		
—		
3		Group evaluation.
—		

End of school day. .... Student/Group
Mr. J. Brown — Teacher

Figure 3. Individual/Group Contract (see Fig. 2)

(b) *Priorities list approach*

Just as the contract approach is an "open" approach which provides much flexibility, so is the *priorities list* approach to scheduling. In this approach, a teacher ranks in order of importance the task goals for the day. For example, a teacher of a Year 6 class has arranged the following priorities for a day's teaching from a list of tasks or activities to be done (see Figure 4).

Underlying assumptions

There are various assumptions which underpin the "priorities list" approach (PLA). Some of the basic assumptions are related to philosophical orientation and others to practical considerations in meeting the needs of children and teachers. Briefly stated, these assumptions are that:

- Schools attempt to do too much in a day and, in so doing, fragment learning by stopping activities when they have not completely served their purpose and before there has been a chance for children to comprehend fully and practise learning. By listing in priority order those things which are to be covered each day without rigid time constraints, this fragmentation can be overcome.
- The priorities list approach (PLA) is less complex than other approaches and therefore simpler to use and less stressful on teachers. That is, *the teacher just works through the list.* When one task is completed for the day to the mutual benefit of children and teacher, the next task is begun. What is not completed in a day is rescheduled for the next day.
- The PLA reflects real life. One job is completed before another begins.
- Over a period of time, say 5-10 days, the proportions of time allocated to various curriculum areas are met as the teacher has in mind the need for a balanced curriculum.
- The approach is very flexible in that it allows for themes to be selected and those activities which genuinely relate to it followed up in the most appropriate order and according

Class Year 5 **Teacher** Mrs K. Smith
School ______________________ **Date** 24/10/85

Time Spent	**Subject/ Topic**	**Notes**	**Comments**
	1. Oral Language Daily Programme	Discuss latest news on topic of interest.	
	2. Mathematics — Introduction to X'n of fractions	Book 5, p.16-25. Matching activity. Conference — Joan and Mark.	
	3. Phys. Ed.	Cards 46 & 18.	
	4. Reading	Group: 1. DSR SF Level 15 2. Language Reconstruction 3. Individualised reading 4. "	
	5. *Art*	**Appreciation** — Examine prints on use of line. **Perspective** — Using lines to capture mood.	
	6. Writing	Revising drafts of report on class trip. Conference with Alan, Bill, Mary and Sue.	

Figure 4. Day Pad — Priorities List

to the time required for satisfactory exploration. Since different themes require different emphases, the scheduling for one theme will not necessarily reflect the scheduling for another. In this way, long sequences involving a variety of activities may be scheduled.

- PLAs are said to be very successful in meeting individual, group and class needs, since the scheduling of any one day reflects the needs observed during the previous day. Unlike many other schedules based on flexible timetables, the PLA treats the most urgent needs in a here-and-now situation.

Critical analysis

Figure 4 shows a priority list containing six tasks which the teacher aims to accomplish in the day. A good balance of activities is shown, with areas of academic concentration such as language and mathematics broken up by physical education and art. In addition, there is a reasonable amount of work scheduled. (Note there is space for specifying the time actually taken for each activity.) Moreover, it is possible to use this approach with any style of teaching or learning, e.g. group discussion, discovery, questioning and other approaches.

The main concern over this method of scheduling is that this approach, in the final analysis, appears to be just like any other daily schedule which reflects a weekly timetable. However, because it is not tied to a fixed allocation of curriculum areas, there are possibilities that some areas of the curriculum may be ignored or minimised. In addition to this concern, many educators, whilst admitting that the approach does make teaching less pressured and more open, feel that it may only be workable by experienced teachers who are able to (a) bring about learning needs in children, and (b) teach the basic skills as they emerge in a variety of incidental opportunities.

(c) *General timetabling — Blocked approaches*

Most teachers, including many experienced "open classroom" teachers, use the block-time approach to scheduling the classroom day (see Figure 4). Although this approach appears on the surface to be a rigid, restrictive approach, it need not be so. How the schedule is used reflects the methodologies and philosophy of the teacher, rather than the actual structure of the schedule itself. In addition, it has stood the test of time.

This approach provides flexibility by arranging largish blocks of time in which related activities take place. Thus the schedule shown in Figure 5 depicts four blocks of time as outlined below.

Block 1. Language exploratory
Block 2. Mathematics
Block 3. Language instructional
Block 4. Cultural studies
Block 5. Language social and cultural

By blocking the time in the daily schedule this way, the teacher is able to provide opportunities for:

- variation of time spent on activities to meet the present requirements and needs of the children;
- individual instruction;
- themes to be explored;
- contract approaches to be used;
- better access and use of resources;
- the children to take responsibility for their own learning in all, or specifically delegated, blocks of time.

In addition to the above, the "blocked" approach shown in Figure 5 provides an excellent transition from formal scheduling (which it can depict) to the very open contract and completely individual approaches described previously. Greater flexibility from the blocked approach can occur if the blocks themselves are not seen as tied and rigid, but able to be moved round in the daily schedule, to provide greater continuity of time. Thus,

TIME	BLOCKS	CURRICULUM	SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES
9.00	1. **Language**—exploratory and instructional	Oral language	Discussion of —News —Objects —Interesting events —Listening/speaking games —singing
9.30		**DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES AND READING** **Reading** During developmental activities, the teacher works with groups and/or individuals inc. —Language experience —Shared book —Direct silent reading	**Development Activities** —Play with objects, blocks, water, sand, play-dough, construction materials. —Sorting, matching, pairing of beads, buttons, bits and pieces. —Play acting, dressing-up. —Drawing, painting, cutting, pasting. —Talking, telephoning, educational games. —Listening to music, tapes, educational radio. —Shop and house play.
10.30	▨	Recess	
10.45	2. **Mathematics**	Maths	
11.15	3. **Language** enrichment and Production	Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR)	
11.30		Language (Related Language Arts)	Choral Speaking Writing stories, speaking and listening, spelling, printing and handwriting.
12.00	▨	Lunch break	
1.00	4. **Cultural Studies**	Art Music Physical Education Social Studies Reading ↑	Reading to children Nature Walks Various other related activities
2.00	5. **Language** and **Cultural Studies**	Language ↓ Social	Performances and sharing, writing and doing.

Figure 5. Blocked Time Approach to Daily Scheduling **General Timetable for Years 1 to 3**

TIME	BLOCK	CURRICULUM				
8.50	1. Instructional Skills Focus	Maths				
9.50		Activity—Music & Games and/or PPE				
10.00		Reading—Groups or individual				
	Recess Break					
10.45	2. Language	Language (1) Discussion (2) Written language (3) Activities (4) Other				
11.30		Reading—Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading				
12.00	Lunch Break					
1.00	3. Arts and Sciences and Language	Social Stud.	Social Stud.	Science	Drama	Independent Study
2.00		P.E.	Music	P.E.	Music	
3.30		Art	Language	Language	Sport	Evaluation & Planning
		Mon.	**Tues.**	**Wed.**	**Thurs.**	**Fri.**

Figure 6. Blocked Timetable Showing Daily Schedules of Work

Block 1 and Block 5 may be juxtaposed to provide for an out of class experience or some similar learning situation. Figure 5 also shows some breakdown of the blocks into curriculum areas and activities by way of illustration of how the blocks may be used.

Blocked schedules can accommodate a wide range of activities, thus allowing for specific instructional needs to be met in well defined areas of the curriculum (e.g. social science, science, drama and music) which become more academically focused in upper school classes. Figure 6 shows a format in which the morning blocks, where the basic skills are taught, remain the same for each day. However, the afternoon blocks have schedules which vary daily to accommodate specific curriculum areas.

Daily schedules for Year 1

The scheduling of the school day for children in their first year at school requires the teacher to take a more active role in organising the learning experiences. Accordingly, daily schedules for Year 1 classes tend to be more teacher centred in the arrangement of activities. This is not to say that children in Year 1 are not capable of some independent work, nor that they should not have a chance to be independent. It is just an acknowledgement that the capacity of children at this age to sustain long periods of concentration is limited.

Moreover, the beginner needs some predictable structure so that a sense of security is created. For these reasons, schedules in the very early years tend to be teacher directed and the learning activities kept short to retain interest and involvement. Despite these limitations, as already stated, the teacher should, from the very beginning, foster independence by having the children suggest what activities should be scheduled and by having the children become more responsible for initiating work within activities. After a few weeks some children are ready for a little independent work in some areas, e.g. recreational reading, instructive play and some stages in writing.

The following set of schedules reflects the blocking of curriculum time as a means of organising the time in a Year 1 class. It should be noted that, at the earliest stages, activities are scheduled for 20 minute periods. This brief scheduling of activities is a reflection of the principles which underpin the daily schedule applied to this level of the school.

These three schedules give some idea of the pattern of the day but they can easily be adapted to suit other patterns of work.

It should be noted that the length of the school day varies from place to place. We know that children differ in their adjustment to school and that their needs vary from time to time. The conditions operating within the school must also be taken into account as must other factors such as school bus schedules.

With the new entrants to Year 1 there will be no reading groups as such, but, as soon as some children are ready to read in a group with the teacher, it is suggested that the last part of the morning and afternoon be used for this purpose. At this stage it would seem to be of benefit to all concerned for the teacher to allow the less advanced children to indulge in free activities within the classroom. This is greatly facilitated if a teacher aide is available.

Gradually more children will be ready to stay on the full time, but the teacher, by then, will be more able to cope because the more advanced children will be becoming independent.

Schedules for Year 1

Schedule 1: Beginners

9.00-10.30	Developmental activities. Teacher works with individuals using language experience (L.E.).
10.45-11.20	Numbers.
11.20-11.40	Poetry, rhymes, language activities.
11.40-12.00	Reading to children.
1.00- 2.00	Quiet activities — written language and caption stories — additional language experience.
2.00- 2.30	Music, movement, story dramatisation.

Schedule 2: After the first few weeks as children become ready to work in groups for reading

9.00-10.30	Developmental activities for whole class. Teacher works with two groups on ''shared books'' or simple reading activities.
10.45-11.05	Mathematics.
11.05-11.25	Physical education.
11.25-11.40	Poetry, rhymes, language games. Speaking and listening.
11.40-12.00	Reading with Groups 3 and 4. Others — art or silent reading — looking at books.
1.00- 1.20	Recreational reading (USSR).
1.20- 2.00	Language.
2.00- 2.30	Music, movement, story, dramatisation.
2.30- 3.00	Reading with Groups 5 and 6 if necessary — or individual language experience — free activity for remainder.

Schedule 3: An alternative to Schedule 2

9.00-10.00	Developmental activities.
10.00-10.30	Talking time — writing news — weather — etc.
10.45-11.35	Quiet activities, language.
11.35-12.00	Free activities and/or library work for most of the class. Instructional reading with selected individuals or groups.
1.00- 1.30	Mathematics.
1.30- 2.30	Music and movement, poetry, story, dramatisation and physical education.
2.45- 3.15	Recreational reading (USSR).

Learning centres and the daily schedule

There are two types of learning centres:

1. An activity area (*corner*) set-up for work or exploration on a **subject** or **interest** basis and permanently available. Examples of this kind of learning centre are the following activity areas or corners:
   Reading
   Writing
   Listening
   Drama
   Science
   Construction
   Art
   Music
   Play
   Maths
   Home
   Talking
   In each of these areas, activities, resources and materials related to each area are stored and displayed or ready for use. The activities are changed frequently and children are often given specific tasks to do in working sessions with the teacher, which must be completed in the relevant area.
2. A special location or display on a particular theme. The theme may be derived from social science, science, a current interest or literature. This type of learning centre, which contains resources, materials and displays, remains in place as long as the theme it supports is being treated.

Learning centres, when organised thoroughly and when the children are shown how to use them, can provide the framework which allows teachers to partially or completely individualise their program. Learning centres provide opportunities for children to practise the skills which they have been taught in instructional situations and, in so doing, provide chances for independent learning and the growth of learner responsibility.

In blocked schedules, where there is considerable time available for many different activities in an area (e.g. language: speaking, listening, reading and writing), learning centres provide opportunities for more than one activity to be pursued at any one time. When used in this way, learning centres provide the basis for what to do with the other children (the children with whom the teacher is not at that moment working).

The organisation of effective learning centres makes blocked and individualised schedules achievable, as well as providing the positive child centred learning outcomes already mentioned.

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Organising Space and Materials

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This chapter begins by looking at the conditions which enable pre-school children to master the oral language of their environment surely and successfully. It then suggests ways of managing resources and space within the classroom to allow for similar "natural" conditions to apply in other areas of language learning, e.g. reading and writing. Written by a practising classroom teacher, it describes her own practices and is, therefore, a personal description of a single (but successful) classroom in action—an extended case-study of one person's approach.

TEACHING, LIKE LEARNING, is a highly personal process. Consequently, it is not possible to write a formula for the successful organisation of a classroom, one which will work flawlessly for every practitioner. Classroom organisation, like any learning situation, is one which will only work when it has been designed by a teacher to suit the needs and interests of children in that grade and which also suits the personality and philosophy of the teacher concerned.

In other words, a teacher needs to work through the process of developing a successful classroom environment. We learn by making mistakes, by rethinking; *we learn best by discovery rather than by prescription.*

It is possible, however, to establish *guidelines* for a successfully organised learning environment. These guidelines are the conditions which operate in the most successful learning situation with which we are ever involved—that of learning to talk, "naturally".

Natural learning

Research by Cambourne (1985) has identified a number of conditions which he asserts make learning to speak the language of one's culture possible. He further argues that these conditions are, except for superficial differences, uniform across cultures. Because of this universality and the natural way in which the conditions come into play, they have been given a "naturalistic" label; Cambourne refers to it as "a natural model of learning".

Cambourne (1984) describes this early learning environment as one of IMMERSION. Within it the infant is immersed in countless DEMONSTRATIONS of speech—words, phrases, sentences—chunks of language, always in context. Such demonstrations occur from the very moment of birth and continue in varying degrees of complexity up to, and beyond, the point when the child gains control of speech.

Such demonstrations are necessary if learning is to occur. And learners have to be ready to "engage"—to believe that they *can* do it, that it will be *worthwhile*, and to feel *safe* while doing so.

Older humans, ever supportive of the baby's primitive attempts to talk (APPROXIMATIONS) respond, always in a positive way, providing immediate FEEDBACK right at the point of need, e.g. "Dat cup" being met with "Yes, that is a cup, what a clever boy you are". Here the approximation is accepted, supported—and a correct model given immediately. Within this supportive environment the child is allowed plenty of time in the early formative years to PRACTISE talk. All this time the immediate family shows a natural EXPECTATION that the child will eventually learn to talk. Parents never doubt that this will occur. They don't rush the child or exert undue pressure. They give children the RESPONSIBILITY to internalise vocabulary and complicated language structures when they are ready to do so. Language learning here is uncomplicated; it is enduring and it has occurred under the most natural of conditions.

The vitally important principle which is operative here is that oral language is taught and learned *as a whole*. Never is it fragmented into initial sounds, blends, pronunciation, syntax etc. It is learned naturally and always in a context which is meaningful and provides for the meaning to be construed. Learning to talk is not unnecessarily complicated and it is durable, lasting a lifetime. Oh, to extend that into other language-learning areas and to achieve such results!

Natural learning in the classroom

If indeed Cambourne has correctly identified the major conditions necessary for the successful learning of what appears to be a difficult process—that of effective oral communication—then it is worth considering that if our classrooms can provide similar conditions, then learning in other areas of language should come naturally, easily, flawlessly, and remain durable.

In my classroom I have made a conscious effort to provide an environment which allows for these conditions for natural learning. Within this, the language plan itself, the activities and strategies used, the materials provided for use and the physical layout of the room have evolved, changing many times, until we have now arrived at a situation where real learning is occurring. By this I mean that learning is individualised totally, each child determining his or her own language activities, working at self-determined rates, progressing and changing when confident to do so.

There has been a positive growth in self-discipline, the ability to organise time, respect for other children, their strengths and limitations, and their need for personal space. Children have imposed upon themselves natural standards that suit their situation.

There are no graded groups or obvious units of comparison. There is co-operative learning, freedom, responsibility and enthusiasm that could never be planned for. Cambourne's conditions provide the structure for this language plan, where the main focus is reading. Literature is the demonstration of good writing, the sources of words and language which children need to become able communicators. It is the centre from which all other language activities naturally flow.

Figure 1 represents the conditions of natural learning and their practical application in the classroom.

Immersion in a literature-based language classroom means, in large part, print resources. It is worth spending time discussing these.

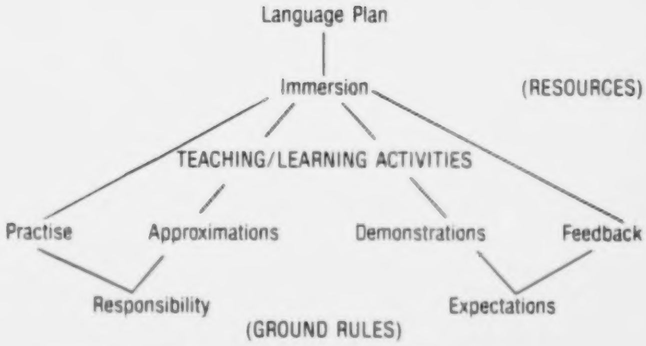


Figure 1. Conditions for Natural Learning in the Classroom

Resources

Print—tools of the trade

The provision of resources suitable for such a plan is arrived at by trial and error. It is essential, however, that adequate and accessible materials are provided: resources that are extensive and comprehensive, because just as the learning environment of the developing infant provided endless examples of speech patterns, so a classroom must extend the scope of language to the child and provide many examples of the written word. Just as the oral language learner needed saturation in the medium to tease out how the grammar, the sound system and the rules of talk worked, so the written language learner needs thousands of examples of how punctuation, story structure, characters, genre, purposes and a host of other attributes makes written language work.

A teacher therefore must ask:

- Will there be *enough* printed matter to cater to the needs of the class?
- Is the material suited to the *interests* of the children, their age and capabilities?
- Is there a *variety* of materials, especially in terms of "register" and genre?
- Is the *quality* high? (Is it a good demonstration of written language?)
- Will the children get the maximum *use* from the materials made available to them?
- Are the *ground rules* of use known and understood?

Figure 2 summarises the resources aspect of the language plan.

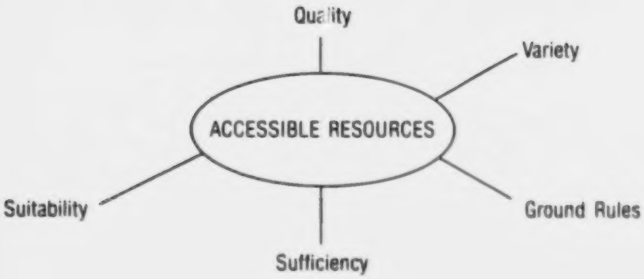


Figure 2. Resources

Teachers shouldn't need to feel that the task of providing good resources is beyond them. Use the experts: get help from the children and from the school librarian, who is far more aware of what children do read and therefore can direct accordingly. I have found that the following works for me:

1. *Create a library in the classroom*

In order to provide a collection for your classroom, take the children along to the school library and allow them to select two books each that they would like to have in the classroom. This ensures immediately that there is material that children can read and, what is better, will want to read.

2. *Increase the variety of materials*

Supplement what the children choose by ensuring that the bulk borrowing includes poetry books, short stories, picture books (yes, even for senior classes), non-fiction reading, magazines and newspapers, autobiographies, anthologies etc. Dan Fader (1976) suggests that we should aim at having 1000 books in each classroom. Maybe your school library couldn't accommodate such a borrowing, but the implications are evident. Children need models and stimulation from books—not from a narrow selection but from as wide a range as possible.

3. *Keep the individual differences in mind*

When selecting resources for your children the following points are worth considering.

- Do you need books without words for the non-reader, or as a stimulus for story writing?
- Poorer readers are helped in comprehending a story when illustrations clarify the text and enable the child to work out relationships in the story.
- Children of all ages appreciate books with a read-along tape. If these are not available make your own; the children are used to your voice and will appreciate the effort.
- Developing readers enjoy books with a familiar story structure, e.g. fairy tales, folk tales, fables, repetitive patterns such as *Brown Bear Brown Bear* (Eric Carle) and rhyme/rhythm patterns, as found in books by Dr Seuss, for example.

4. *Develop "author-awareness"*

Once children get a taste for certain authors they often want to stick with them, so make sure there are other books by the author available. (My own class has exhausted the supply of books by Robin Klein, Roald Dahl, Beverly Cleary, Pat Hutchins, C.S. Lewis, Betsy Byars, Tony Ross, Michael Foreman and "Banjo" Paterson.)

It's a good idea to find authors who write for a range of ability levels, so that all children can feel a sense of common ownership of that author. (Authors who do this, and have appealed to my class, are Robin Klein, Margaret Mahy, Roald Dahl, Colin Thiele, Shirley Hughes, Pat Hutchins and Christobel Mattingley.)

5. *Use technology*

Well loved poems or songs can be written or photocopied onto overhead transparencies. Children can and will use audio-visual equipment competently and responsibly. Although books are our major print resource in the language classroom, audio-visual equipment can be used to provide children with models of other writers' products.

A cassette player linked to a listening-post provides a ready source of stories. There are many commercially available kits catering for all abilities and ages K-6. They come complete with sets of small books so that children can "read-along" with the taped story.

Teachers can also make up their own sets. Most schools have multiple copies of suitable books, e.g. Dr Seuss series, Mt Gravatt, Rigby, *School Magazine* stories and articles. It doesn't take long to read a story on to tape yourself. Making the recording yourself means that you can add instructions at the end of the tape, e.g.

- *"Rewind the tape and listen again"*
- *"Stop the tape and go to the large table. From the story you have just heard, draw . . . and write words which describe them."*

The overhead projector is an excellent aid to help the teacher demonstrate the processes involved in composing and editing a piece of writing. It is also a useful tool to use in group work. While one group of children can be working with the projector, the teacher is then free to work more closely with other children.

6. *Immerse the room in print*

A literary environment—immersion—should not of course stop with the selection of books. It should extend to the walls, windows, bulletin boards and hanging space in the classroom.

- If a poem or song is treated, letter it on colourful cardboard and display it clearly.
- Science experiments can be written up by a group of children and displayed.
- Social studies work (particularly that which shows all the hallmarks of quality writing) and other well edited and revised work should be hung wherever space allows.
- Stories taken through to publication should be shown to be valued and displayed, either in a class anthology or on a bulletin board.
- Good leads for stories, written by children or gleaned from printed books should hold a prominent place.
- Charts of synonyms, similes, problem words etc. should form part of environmental print.
- When walls and windows are full, use hanging space and create mobiles of print matter.

Environmental print must be of a high standard to help create a stimulating and cheerful room of which children are proud. Such print should have some degree of logical order to it so that a child feels secure and will know where to find appropriate vocabulary in a particular writing situation. Don't take down displays as soon as a unit of work is finished—take down only when new space is required. A child's interest in a topic does not finish when the timetable does; often a child will want to revisit a theme and write and read about it long after a teacher has finished treating it.

Environmental print is especially important for developing readers. To such readers, particularly those children in the lower grades, wall print is as much a reference aid as dictionaries are to senior or more independent children.

7. *Get children to "engage" with print*

How do we make children aware of our print resources? Try the following:

- Take infant grades on "print walks" each morning at the start of language lessons. Read from just one section of your room each day if the room holds lots of exciting print, but make sure the children are aware of where the words are.
- Display books well by:
  - —having them arranged in library fashion, i.e. fiction, non-fiction, poetry, magazines etc.;
  - —keeping books on a theme or by the one author together;

  —showing books with enticing covers prominently so that the illustration does the selling.
- Teachers most definitely need to "sell" books by:
  —paraphrasing the story and emphasising the exciting or humorous parts;
  —showing the book cover, reading the blurb, highlighting the illustrations;
  —telling the story up to a significant point;
  —reading the story to the children; they always want to re-read a good tale. (Recently I did a quick survey three weeks after reading C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* to my class. Four students had re-read the story, ten had read one other book from the Narnia series and five had read two or more.)

8. *Scissors, glue and a little ingenuity*

I have found over the years that less able readers tend to feel overawed by "thick" books—novels and stories with lots of text and few illustrations. For such children, try making "skinny books". There are lots of books in which each chapter stands as a self-contained story. Such books are suitable to adapt into "skinny books". Pull such a book apart, staple each chapter together as a unit, give it a colourful cardboard cover and you immediately have a more accessible set of stories. *Paddington Bear, Pippi Longstocking, Early Encounters* and *Carry On Reading* are good for adapting into "skinny books". Many of my children have worked all the way through *Paddington* since I changed its format.

School magazines, particularly those put out in New South Wales, have good articles, stories, poems etc. but are not often presented in an attractive way. I have found that they are better used when selected parts are removed. For example:

- Plays: take out as many copies as there are characters in the play. Store in a drama box.
- Stories which are serialised can be better used by poorer readers if they are taken out of the magazine and given a temporary cover. Each month a new chapter is added, but the children are reading the story in more manageable chunks. Often, once the children have mastered such a story, they will take out the complete version from the school library. Because they have felt success in reading the book chapter by chapter, children feel more confident in tackling a "thick" book.
- A good strategy to use with poems or short stories is either to copy or glue them onto thin card and then cut these up into chunks of language. The child now needs to use all the strategies he or she knows about the process of reading in order to re-sequence the writing. This involves reading, predicting, confirming, revising. Such a resource is usually very popular, so leave it around for much re-visiting.

9. *Use your resources effectively*

A teacher must necessarily be perceptive, so take a close look around your classroom to see if the resources you have there are being used effectively. Children are agreeable and curious creatures who will readily use what suits them—and ignore what does not. Therefore, if some resources in your room are ill used, then make sure you ask yourself why. Why aren't the children engaging with them?

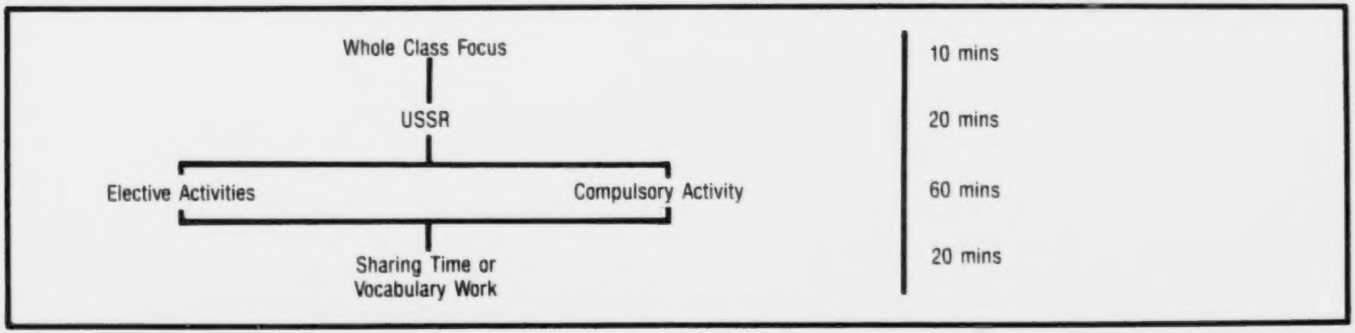
- Is it because you haven't "sold" them adequately?
- Is it because the children had no say in the choosing and therefore might not be interested in the materials?
- Is it because your language lessons are too highly structured, with little time for browsing and tasting?
- Have the children finished with the materials? If so, it is time to replace a selection of resources. However, make sure that once this is done you take the time to talk to the class about the new material, do some "selling", let them know clearly what is there and the opportunities for use.
- Can you modify any unused resources to make them more accessible, as was done with the "skinny books"?
- Check that non-fiction books have clear headings to help

the young reader to cope with the expository style of writing.

One important thing to keep in mind when gathering resources for a "print-saturated literary environment" is the **time** factor. When learning to talk, a child has unlimited time within which he listens to demonstrations of correct speech. Language time in a classroom is much more defined and therefore the quality of our demonstrations of good writing must be of a high standard—quantity now being replaced by quality. So determine your purposes and objectives and build quality materials to help you achieve these.

Organising space and time

My daily language plan, at the moment, lasts for two hours and is broken up in the following way.



It has been designed in such a way that the children in my class take control and responsibility for their development in reading and in writing, so that language is totally individualised. For this reason my class has taken an active part in the selection of language resources and we have a comprehensive collection of books, magazines, language activities and inviting reading is needed. The only time I as a teacher obviously intervene is during the compulsory activity when, each day, I withdraw one parallel group of six so that I can monitor and evaluate progress. At all other times the child makes the decision, selects the activity and determines where the activity will take place.

The first ten minutes of language always requires the children to be together. This whole class focus is a settling time, focusing in on language and literature. Depending on the activity, the class will be seated either on the floor in the library area or at their desks.

Floor space is preferred if I am

- reading part of an on-going serial;
- telling a story;
- "selling" books;
- discussing authors or stories.

Often, after having read a story, the whole class might spend the first ten minutes analysing characters or the significant happenings of the tale. This activity requires me to record responses. With senior pupils an efficient way to do this is by having children sit at desks, with teacher working at the chalkboard.

Next, USSR follows for approximately twenty minutes. Seating is self-selected at this time and can take place on seats or on the floor. A comfortable environment in which free reading is allowed enables the child to engage deeply with the text and to persevere with longer books.

After 20-30 minutes a small group is withdrawn so that I may work more closely with the children in this group. This always takes place near my desk and on the floor because it involves discussion and sharing. This work area is acknowledged by the other children who at this same time work on self-elected activities, taking responsibility for their own learning. Elective activities might extend to such things as:

- **Weekly general knowledge sheet**, for which the children require access to the reference books—to dictionaries, atlases, encyclopaedias and a thesaurus.
- **Continued free reading**, individual and shared. This freedom to continue reading after USSR has encouraged children to read longer texts. Quiet spots in cushioned areas are favourites here.
- **"Process" writing**—because most of our activities which follow on from reading have a writing component, and reading/writing are the basis for my demonstration lessons and the Compulsory Activity, we, as a class, concluded that it was artificial and contrived to have a separate writing time. Free writing is therefore an elective activity, partially controlled by a contract which the children have to meet each term. Writing can be found occurring at various places in the classroom, depending on the need of the child:
  —floor space for small group peer conferencing;
  —long tables for writing at drafting stages;
  —quiet tables at the back of the room for times of concentration and reflection.
- **Play and poetry reading**—often a noisy group is banished to available space inside or outside the room.
- **Special interest groups**—sharing readings on a particular author or working together on a joint project. The children need space to interact. This is usually found around the small tables at the back of the room.
- **Computer group**—small groups of two or three children work in privacy on the large computer table placed safely at the back of the room.
- **Language games**—children working individually or co-operatively with vocabulary cards, sequencing games etc.

The final 20 minute segment of language is usually taken up with a whole class sharing session. Children come to it often simply to share and read passages of good writing. They may discuss the author and his or her strong points if other children are conversant with the books. Problems encountered in writing are raised and solutions discussed. This is a time for developing confidence in language, when all of its parts come together, and when ideas and opinions are clarified:

> Experience has shown that just as adults crystallise their ideas and develop insights by discussion of a movie, book or play, so children gain immensely more from their reading by discussion. Often it is only when the behaviour of a fictional character is analysed, however tentatively, that the links with real life are seen. Identification . . . needs conversation about a book to bring insight into the conscious.
>
> *Maurice Saxby*

Organising space

Obviously a plan which allows for and encourages movement around the room needs to be organised in such a way that the following are catered for:

- individual work space;
- co-operative group areas;
- floor space for reading quietly;
- silent work area;
- floor space for whole class sharing;
- whole class view of the chalkboard;
- resources arranged so that children have ready access to them.

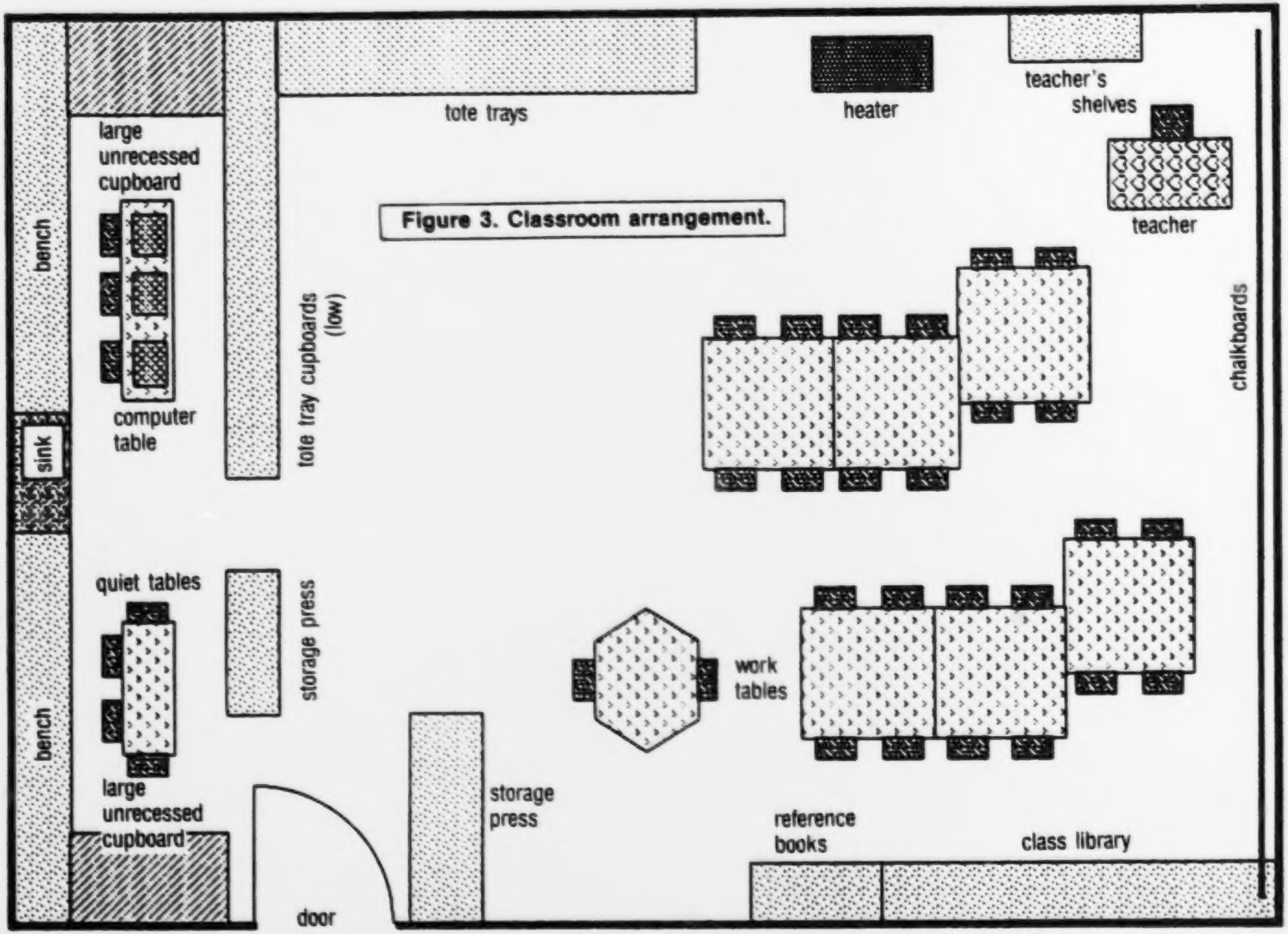


Figure 3. Classroom arrangement.

tote trays
heater
teacher's shelves
large unrecessed cupboard
bench
computer table
sink
tote tray cupboards (low)
teacher
chalkboards
quiet tables
storage press
work tables
bench
large unrecessed cupboard
storage press
door
reference books
class library

Some may argue that a very large room is needed. Not so. I achieved all of this in an average-sized square room in an old block. This room has unrecessed cupboards which take up valuable space, no hat room (therefore shelves accommodate school bags) and few windows. Chalkboards cover one entire wall. The room is partially carpeted. There are twenty-five Year 5 children in the class, so desks and chairs are quite large. Notwithstanding these constraints, the furniture has been arranged in ways that *do* cater for everything specified above.

Figure 3 shows this graphically.

The language plan allows for and encourages movement around the room. Desks have been arranged in two parallel rows, offset at one end. This enables all children to see the chalkboard and overhead projector screen, yet still allows us plenty of floor space and enables children to move from area to area with the least disruption to fellow students. As the children sit facing each other, there is plenty of opportunity for interaction and discussion, which are so necessary in a language classroom.

Conclusion

This language plan works for us because it satisfies our needs in language and because we all know, understand and acknowledge a workable set of ground rules: freedom, balanced by responsibility.

The results are exciting and very rewarding. The importance of the teacher is in creating the environment, providing for the conditions of natural learning but not in controlling the learning. It is a system based on trust and mutual support.

One of the greatest gains from the new approach has been the emergence of a caring class—caring in terms of language, but also in terms of the relationships that children now have with one another. They feel united in their new-found knowledge of books and authors and they show a great deal of sensitivity towards their peers. No longer is there an obvious difference between good and poor readers; because they share common interest in common authors they act in a completely equal manner. Self esteem is developing rapidly, children are eager to pick up a challenge because the atmosphere is so supportive. I have no doubt that learning is occurring, in its most natural way, by discovery, by trial and error, by the elimination of pressured situations, by the allowance for language to be seen as a whole rather than fragmented.

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Grouping for Personalised Classroom Learning

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The first part of this chapter discusses the theoretical and practical basis for providing personalised learning experiences for all children through appropriate grouping techniques. This is supported by a brief survey of recent research on grouping and the teaching of reading. A practical approach to more flexible within-class grouping is then described and illustrated by a detailed class program based on modern fairy tales. Teachers are encouraged gradually to extend the flexibility of their classroom management beyond this concept of classroom groups so that, through the establishment of more co-operative learning environments, they can maintain a personal and individual response to the developing needs of all children in their schools.

NO MATTER WHAT CRITERIA are used for allocating children to classes or groups, the result will always be a collection of individuals who are more different than they are alike. Approaches to grouping must emphasise these differences and capitalise on them to promote effective learning. This principle is crucial. If groups of children are regarded as identical or even similar in terms of their instructional needs, they are less likely to make genuine personal progress, even though they may successfully complete classroom learning tasks. However, faced with the almost overwhelming demands of attempting to individualise classroom learning, most teachers see the effective use of groups as a valuable way of differentiating instruction.

The teacher's attitude is the key. Rather than attempting to restrict the range of differences among pupils through the maintenance of homogeneous groups, effective teachers use a variety of flexible groupings specifically to deal with the very wide range of pupil responses to most learning situations.

More teachers must be encouraged to abandon simplistic grouping procedures through which they pretend that pupils' individual needs are met through the operation of (usually three) ability groups within or across classes. But for this change to occur teachers need to realise how traditional approaches to grouping inhibit pupils' growth and contribute to learning problems.

A welcome catalyst for such a change has been the popularisation of Donald Graves' work (Walshe, 1981; Turbill, 1982, 1983) which focuses teachers' attention on the process of *writing* and its implications for the classroom. This has encouraged many teachers to adopt a more personalised approach to classroom management through individual and group "conferencing", sharing etc. However, it appears that many teachers have not yet been stimulated to examine the *reading* process in the same way and consequently classroom management is influenced more by folklore about reading than by informed views based on current theory and research.

Current knowledge of the reading process

Psycholinguistic accounts of the reading process (Goodman, 1976; Smith, 1982) and current research into the reading behaviour of children (Cambourne and Rousch, 1979) have put the role of the grapho-phonic cue system into its proper perspective, emphasising, rather, the significance of syntactic and semantic cues in reading and indeed in differentiating between good and poor readers. What a reader already knows about a topic or subject, about the type of language used and about the genre of the text, determines how effectively the reader will construct meaning from the print he or she encounters. The significant role of this prior knowledge in reading heightens the importance of teachers taking full notice of the individual differences among pupils in generating learning experiences as part of the reading program.

In order to deal effectively with a particular learning task, some pupils will require much more preparatory work in concept development, through both concrete operations and vicarious experiences. There will also be differences in such "entry behaviour" with respect to pupils' familiarity with language appropriate to the topic. In all of this there may be no appreciable difference among the readers' ability to pronounce printed words or classify them according to the sound of the medial vowel!

Consider the following passage:

> **A Typical Three-Address Computer**
>
> As described in an earlier section, a three-address computer functions in a similar manner to a two-address computer, except that the instruction refers to three fields in storage. The Burroughs B200 series of computers (second generation) uses the three address concept. In many respects, including internal coding, the B200 is similar to the IBM 1401. However a significant difference between these two machines is in field length designation. Where the 1401 addresses by the rightmost position and marks the leftmost with a wordmark for field length indication, the B200 addresses by the leftmost position with the length being designated within the instruction

operating on the field.

(Price, W.T. *Introduction to Data Processing*, p. 196.)

All readers of this chapter can, no doubt, say all of the words. All can, like the present writer, give a meaning to each word and yet, like the writer, many readers won't have a clue what this means. One or two people may know very well what this means. All readers of this chapter are of about the same reading ability and yet, for this passage to be of instructional value, the writer would have to organise differential learning tasks, taking into account readers' interest, or lack of it, readers' background knowledge etc.—despite the fact that all are in the same ability group! And yet many classes face such a situation, demonstrated by the "computer" passage, as the norm. All of the children in the same group get the same book, or worse, the same card—and even that would be excusable—but there is no attempt at differential teaching according to the different knowledge and experiences different children within the same group may bring to the task.

If reading and writing occur as an integral part of children's learning throughout the school day, there are many opportunities to extend children's real world experiences through practical work in science, drama, music etc. and to introduce, through oral "contextualised" language, the unfamiliar vocabulary and language structures that are relevant to the reading material naturally associated with such learning experiences. In some schools several classes still have a common period of reading instruction when all children are redistributed on the basis of reading ability, to a different class group which is constituted solely for the reading lesson. These practices do not take account of the nature of the reading process and how reading is developed as a natural part of children's learning. Such practices in ability grouping rest on the rather comfortable, convenient but simplified view of the world which asserts that individual learners can be homogeneously packaged for easy handling. Fortunately, research on grouping and the teaching of reading has begun to expose some of the dangers inherent in such a view.

Current research

Ability grouping and reading teaching

Two recent publications have dealt with the issue of grouping pupils for reading instruction. The first, edited by Dianne Lapp (1980) and entitled *Making Reading Possible Through Effective Classroom Management*, is oriented to the practical concerns of teachers at the workplace and provides a broad summary of the relevant research. In one article O'Donnell and Moore suggest that the research literature dealing with grouping and organisational plans can be summarised as follows:

1. *Homogeneous grouping has not been demonstrated to be an effective method for raising the reading achievement levels of pupils.*
2. *Ability grouping tends to result in a hardening of the categories, especially among low achieving pupils.*
3. *Interaction among pupils of different attainment levels tends to stimulate less able pupils.*
4. *Criteria for composing groups has to be carefully examined.*
5. *Grouping plans should include analysis of strengths and weaknesses within groups.*

A more comprehensively documented review of the research is provided by Hiebert (1983) entitled "An Examination of Ability Grouping for Reading Instruction" and published in the *Reading Research Quarterly*. It may be useful to cite some of the studies which provide the basis for the general position as represented by O'Donnell and Moore (1980). Hiebert notes that there are very few studies that provide information on how reading group placement influences achievement over and above initial differences in reading achievement. The few studies that do exist, however, seem to support the view that homogeneous grouping is not an effective method for raising reading achievement levels of pupils. A recent International Reading Association *Newsletter* (October, 1982) reported a study dealing with single and composite classes which indicated that:

> There is little or no evidence to suggest that placing elementary school (and older) children in multi-grade classes will be detrimental to their reading progress. In fact both programs have produced similar results, with a few marginally significant findings in favouring multi-grade classrooms.
>
> *News for Administrators*, Vol. 2, No. 3, October 1982.

Hiebert noted that the reading literature indicates a dramatic increase in the discrepancy between good readers and poor readers as children progress through the elementary grades (Wilson, 1981). A study by Weinstein (1976) relates this widening gap to different experiences in reading groups. Weinstein found that group membership accounted for a significant amount of variation in children's reading achievement even when original reading readiness had been statistically partialled out. Performances of children in the low ability group declined significantly relative to the performances of the high ability group members, even though they had only been allocated to the groups for a matter of several months. It is not clear precisely what variables related to ability grouping are responsible for these outcomes but, even though causal relationships have not been established, it is interesting to note some of the characteristics of ability group teaching noted by Hiebert, below.

Characteristics of ability group teaching

1. Low ability groups spent much more time on decoding tasks while high ability groups spent more time on meaning-related activities (Gambrell, Wilson and Gantt, 1981; Alpert, 1975; McDermott, 1976).
2. Low ability groups spent much more time on oral reading while high ability groups spent more time on silent reading (Allington, 1977; 1980).
3. Teachers spent much more time on behaviour management with low ability groups (Bloom, 1976; Rosenshine and Berliner, 1978; Gambrell et al., 1981; Good and Beckermann, 1978; Martin and Evertson, 1980; Camp and Zimet, 1975; Eder, 1982) and since time spent on behaviour management is negatively correlated with learning (Brophy, 1979), lower ability groups have diminished opportunity to learn.
4. Teachers were more prone to interrupt poor readers who made oral reading errors than they were good readers who made the same kinds of errors, regardless of the semantic appropriateness of the error (Allington, 1980). Teachers also gave poor readers more grapho-phonic cues to target words, while they gave good readers syntactic and semantic cues.
5. One researcher (Eder, 1982) noted that interruptions of a pupil's oral reading turn by peers or "call outs" were discouraged in the high ability group but not in the low ability group.
6. Another significant aspect is that, in some classes, teachers clearly communicate messages about the status of reading groups (despite clever names or reverse numbering of the groups). Certain resources, for example, are covertly known as the exclusive property of high ability groups.
7. The final point, and perhaps the most important, is the effect of ability grouping on children's affective and social development.

"In summarising the effects of ability grouping on self concept, Rosenbaum (1980) concluded that in most cases average and low ability students give lower self evaluations if they are in ability groups than if they are not." (Hiebert, 1983, p. 243).

Hiebert also reports a study by Leverson (1972) which showed that, among sixth grade pupils, low ability groups expressed more negative feelings about reading and toward their group than did high ability group members.

The remaining aspects of the general summary presented earlier can similarly be supported by recourse to the literature. Hiebert endorses the point about the hardening of the categories indicating that (ability) groups appear to be relatively permanent entities, with teachers making few, if any, changes in group membership after the first month of school (Groff, 1963;

Hawkins, 1966,67; Pikulski and Kirsch, 1979; Weinstein, 1976). It is beyond the scope of this chapter to give a detailed review of the literature dealing with each of these issues. From the evidence which has been presented it is clear that teachers need to abandon many traditional classroom management practices.

Teachers need to confront current research and theory in an effort to establish sound bases for constructing their own innovative approaches to managing learning environments.

Initiating the change

It is not easy to dismantle conventional approaches to classroom organisation within a school. However, many teachers are making good headway in improving grouping arrangements within their own classrooms. They often start out with the usual three groups, then gradually change. A useful transition is the "group-then-regroup" strategy which I have described elsewhere in a program for a Year 4 class (Unsworth, 1984). The same strategy has been applied to one learning experience for Year 3 pupils. Richard Parker (in press) proposes the following Directed Reading/Listening Activity using *The Big Orange* (Mt Gravatt Reading Series, Level 3):

- *Look at the cover.*
- *What do you think the story might be about? Why?*
- *Let's turn over to the first page and look at the picture. Do you still think the story is going to be about ________? Why? Why not?*
- *Now we're going to read the first page.*
  (The reading could be aloud (by teacher and/or pupils), or silent.)
- *What do you think will happen now?*
  (Again, require children to justify their previous viewpoints.)

Then read to the end of page 4—repeat procedure.

- *Were we right? Did ________________ actually happen? What will happen now? Why?*

Then read to the end of pages 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, using the same sorts of questions.

At the end of the story, comprehension may be expanded by asking such questions (with justification of answers as required) as:

- *Do you think this really happened?*
- *If you had been Ben, what would you have done with the big orange?*
- *If you were the shopkeeper, what would you have done with the big orange?*
- *What else could Mrs Fletcher have done with the big orange?*
- *How would you have felt if you were Jason or one of the footballers?*

Parker then indicates how the "group-then-regroup" strategy would be applied to this activity. First, the following Reading Guide was prepared and the same set of directions was recorded on cassette tape.

READING GUIDE *THE BIG ORANGE*

1. First of all, look at the cover of the book without opening it. What do you think the story might be about? Why?
2. Now turn over to the first page and look at the picture. Do you want to change your ideas about the story? Why?
3. Read the first page. Before you turn the second page, try to guess what will happen in the next story.
4. Read to the end of page 4. Were you right about the story? What did you read that surprised you? Why? What do you think the author will write about on the next pages?
5. Now read to the end of page 10. Were you right? Were there any surprises? If so, why do you think the author wrote the story that way? What will happen over the page?
6. Read to the end of page 13. Were you right? Were there any surprises this time? How do you think the author will end his story? If some people in the group don't agree, explain why you think your suggestion is the right one.

Decide which ending is best.

7. Tell your teacher that you are ready for a change of groups.

Secondly, all copies of the book to be used had the last two pages fastened to the back cover, so that the text from page fourteen onwards was inaccessible. Thirdly, three groups were constituted on their ability to handle this story.

GROUPS

DOTS **Dependent on Teacher**	**NIRS** **Nearly Independent Readers**	**IRS** **Independent Readers**
Teacher follows reading guide but reads the story aloud to the children while they follow.	Children follow directions on cassette, reading the story silently or orally. They discuss their answers to the directing questions, checking with cassette for further instructions.	IRS follow guide, read silently and discuss their answers to the directing questions.

The next stage is the "regroup". It is important because pupils are now placed in mixed ability groups to complete the task co-operatively.

When all groups have reached the end of page 13, reconstitute the groups so that there are DOTS, NIRS and IRS in each group.

- *"Now, in your new groups, decide how you think the story will end. Do you all agree? If not, try to decide which is the best ending, and be able to tell the rest of us why you think so."*

Then compare group conclusions and *finally* read the remaining pages, allowing discussion of the accuracy of the predictions.

All pupils are now able to contribute on a relatively equal basis to this task because less able pupils have been "primed", i.e. they have received greater support in the initial phases of the activity. This maintains weaker pupils' positive engagement in the same challenging tasks undertaken by their more capable peers. There are general features of this "group-then-regroup" strategy which could be applied to a wide variety of learning experiences across curriculum areas.

Improving grouping techniques

Creative teachers are developing new patterns of groupwork organisation as they work toward more open, pupil-centred classrooms. The teacher's roles in managing classroom groups might be considered as fitting into three broad categories:

- **Teacher Interactive**—where most of the time involves fairly intensive teacher/pupil interaction.
- **Teacher Supervised**—where pupils progress with occasional guidance and checking by the teacher.
- **Teacher Independent**—where pupils work at a listening post or learning centre or undertake silent reading such that the teacher is present but not actively involved in their learning enterprise.

Initially, teachers move from a whole-class learning experience to a groupwork organisation where there is a one-to-one relationship between these roles and the number of groups, which usually consist of approximately the same number of pupils.

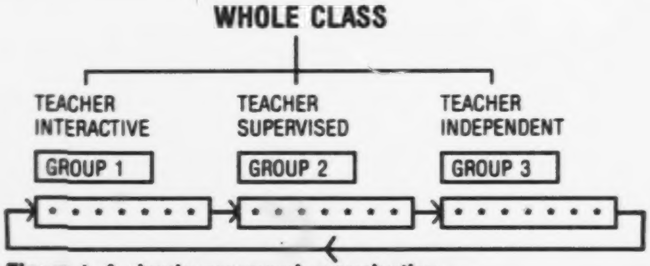


Figure 1. A simple groupwork organisation.

Frequently the groups "rotate" after each groupwork session so that each group experiences the three modes of teacher management, although each group may be involved in quite different learning experiences for any one mode.

Further development in the management of classroom groups is related to a number of important dimensions of teachers' professional growth. These include:

- a continuing desire to seek positive, personal and meaningful relationships with all pupils demonstrated by a thorough knowledge of each pupil's background, interests, abilities, likes and dislikes.
- a commitment to operating in classrooms as a member of an educational team which might include fellow teachers, teacher aides, parents, resource teachers, consultants and other professionals.
- maintaining the currency of their knowledge of the processes of literacy and implications for classroom practice through professional reading, post-graduate study, attendance at conferences, seminars etc.
- understanding the difference between teaching and learning and increasing one's capacity to provide a stimulating and well organised, yet flexible, environment for independent learning.

With these perspectives it is soon realised that one can vary not only the number of groups but also the number of pupils per group.

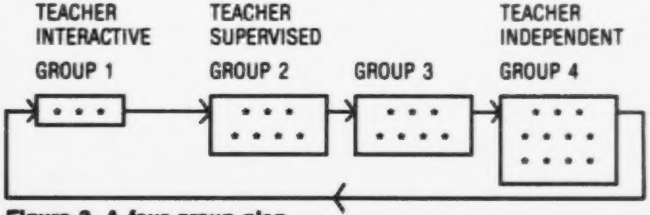


Figure 2. A four group plan.

The groups can then be combined in different ways as suggested in Figure 3.

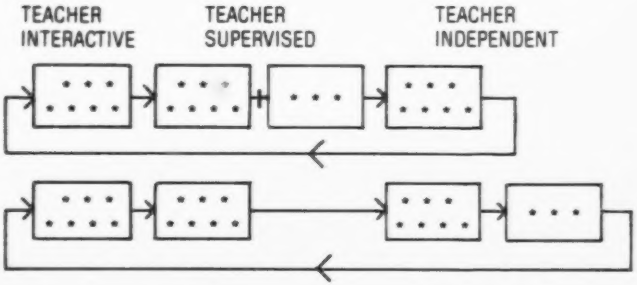


Figure 3. Combining groups.

Not all groups need to experience the various teacher management modes for the same period of time, so the notion of "rotation" is replaced by a more functional distribution of teacher time. This is demonstrated in the following plan for a sequence of groupwork activities with a primary class.

Recycled fairy tales

Only the approach to grouping is discussed here but this must be seen as just one part of an overall program through which the teacher might focus on *fairy tales* to further develop in children's reading and writing:

- an appreciation of plot, setting, characterisation, theme and different writing styles,
- an awareness of role stereotyping,
- an understanding of the way text characteristics can signal an interpretive oral reading of the story.

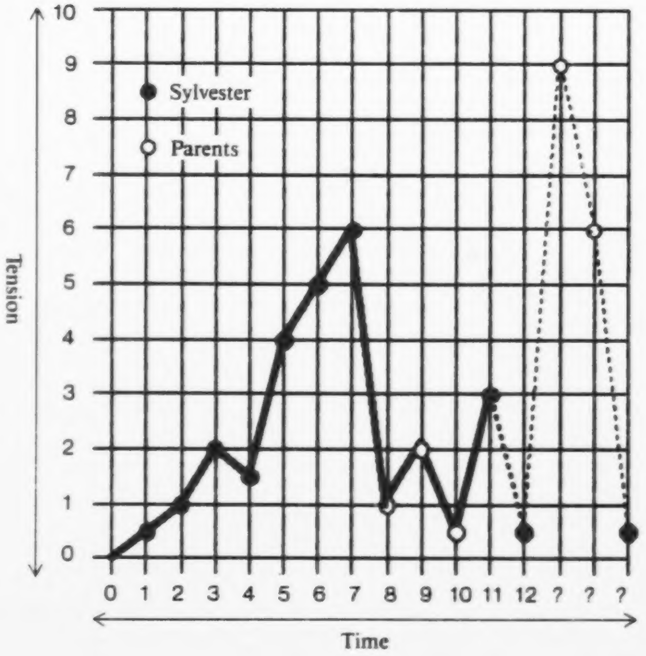
The classroom activities preceding this groupwork activity might include children sharing with the class their favourite fairy tales, bringing the books from home, discussing whether these originally belonged to their parents or other family members, reading and comparing different versions of their favourites and then perhaps visiting a Kindergarten class to read to them and talk with the younger children about fairy tales they like. The teacher may read to the class from *Womenfolk and Fairy Tales* (Minard, 1975), or *Tatterhood* (Phelps, 1978) so that the children might experience less widely known tales where women or girls are the "moving force". Children might then be encouraged to draft (perhaps collaboratively in small groups) a modern fairy tale. To parallel this writing activity a number of other learning experiences could be undertaken by small groups of children. The stimulus materials would be a collection of modern fairy tales which might include such works as:

The Paper Bag Princess (Munsch, 1980)
All the King's Horses (Foreman, 1976)
Roald Dahl's Revolting Rhymes (Dahl, 1982)
Big Red Riding Hood (Carozzi, 1981)
The Reluctant Princess (Klein, 1984)
Jim and the Beanstalk (Briggs, 1973)
The Practical Princess and Other Liberating Fairy Tales (Williams, 1978)

Plot profiles

The classroom use of plot profiles has been described by Johnson and Louis (1985). A plot profile is a combination of a time line as the "X" axis and a rating scale for the "Y" axis, which indicates the degree of excitement. Each major incident is summarised and listed, then rated for excitement (Figure 4).

When introducing this technique Johnson and Louis recommend the use of well-known fairy tales. Following the construction of pupils' first plot profiles under fairly close teacher direction, they can be asked to create further profiles for stories they choose themselves and read silently. The profiles can then be shared and discussed with teachers seeking to elicit supporting rationales from the children, rather than seeking to have each child produce the "correct" profile.



Incident summary: *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble* by William Steig

1. Collect rocks
2. Find extraordinary one
3. Rock is magic
4. Sets out for home
5. Meets lion
6. Becomes rock
7. Cannot return
8. Parents worry
9. Parent seek Sylvester
10. Become despondent
11. Fall (Autumn)
12. Winter, wolf howls.

? Father locks pebble in safe
? All happy together

Figure 4. Plot profile for "Sylvester and the Magic Pebble"
(From *Literacy through Literature*, by Terry D. Johnson and Daphne R. Louis, Methuen Australia, 1985, p. 124. Reprinted with permission.)

Pick-a-path

This activity, derived from the "choose your own adventure" concept, is included in the Teachers' Resource Book for the recently published "extension" phase of the Young Australia Reading Materials (Baxter et al., 1985). The children are presented with a multiple path outline for a fairy story (Figure 5).

INSTANT AUTHOR

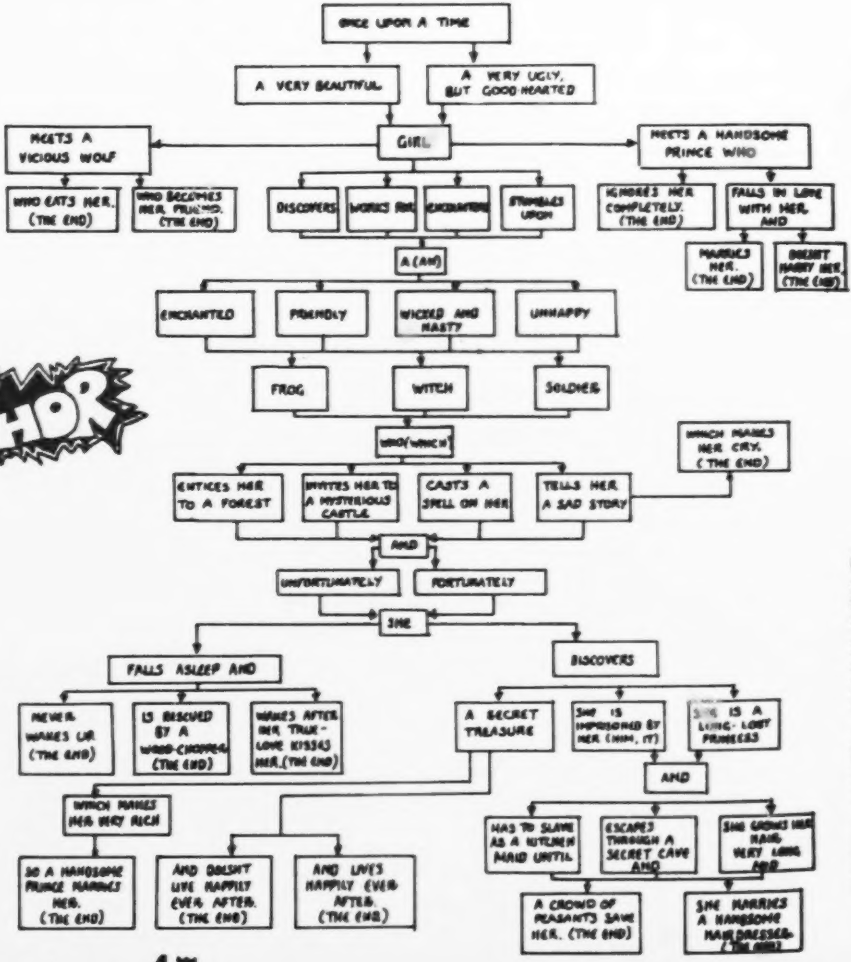

ONCE UPON A TIME
A VERY BEAUTIFUL
A VERY UGLY, BUT GOOD-HEARTED
GIRL
MEETS A VICIOUS WOLF
WHO EATS HER. (THE END)
WHO BECOMES HER FRIEND. (THE END)
MEETS A HANDSOME PRINCE WHO
IGNORES HER COMPLETELY. (THE END)
FALLS IN LOVE WITH HER, AND
MARRIES HER. (THE END)
DOESN'T MARRY HER. (THE END)
DISCOVERS
WORKS FOR
ENCOUNTERS
STUMBLES UPON
A (AN)
ENCHANTED
FRIENDLY
WICKED AND NASTY
UNHAPPY
FROG
WITCH
SOLDIER
WHO (WHICH)
ENTICES HER TO A FOREST
INVITES HER TO A MYSTERIOUS CASTLE
CASTS A SPELL ON HER
TELLS HER A SAD STORY
WHICH MAKES HER CRY. (THE END)
AND
UNFORTUNATELY
FORTUNATELY
SHE
FALLS ASLEEP AND
NEVER WAKES UP. (THE END)
IS RESCUED BY A WOOD-CHOPPER. (THE END)
WAKES AFTER HER TRUE-LOVE KISSES HER. (THE END)
DISCOVERS
A SECRET TREASURE
SHE IS IMPRISONED BY HER (HIM, IT)
SHE IS A LONG-LOST PRINCESS
AND
WHICH MAKES HER VERY RICH
SO A HANDSOME PRINCE MARRIES HER. (THE END)
AND DOESN'T LIVE HAPPILY EVER AFTER. (THE END)
AND LIVES HAPPILY EVER AFTER. (THE END)
HAS TO SLAVE AS A KITCHEN MAID UNTIL
ESCAPES THROUGH A SECRET CAVE AND
SHE GROWS HER HAIR VERY LONG AND
A CROWD OF PEASANTS SAVE HER. (THE END)
SHE MARRIES A HANDSOME HAIRDRESSER. (THE END)

Figure 5. Multiple path outline for a fairy tale (From *Baxter et al*, 1985, p. 86; reproduced with permission of Nelson Education.)

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A useful format for introducing this activity is to reproduce the outline on library catalogue cards positioned on a large piece of "peg board". Golf tees fit neatly through the hole in the catalogue cards and secure them to selected holes in the peg board. The "paths" may be indicated by first threading strands of different coloured wool through the appropriate holes in the peg board. Children can then "pick a path" by removing or reversing the unselected catalogue cards. They may then elaborate the whole story based on the outline chosen. Alternatively, children may generate additional cards to add to the golf tees at each choice point. For example, they may decide that the central character could also be a ghost or a dwarf and add these two cards to the tee already holding the "girl" card. The new cards, combined with existing ones, increase the possible plot permutations. The children may use any one of these outlines to develop fully their own stories.

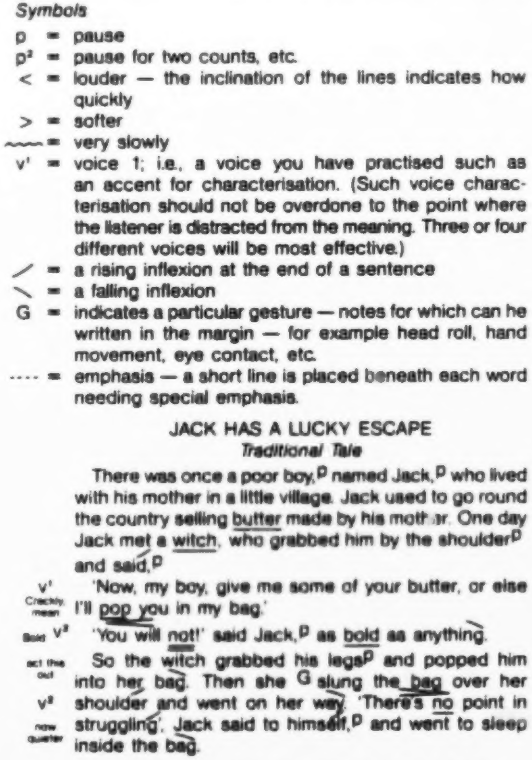
Children may also apply this idea to existing stories. First they identify the story path and map this. A new set of catalogue cards is used to record the key elements of the story and then the wool, cards and golf tees are reassembled on the board. Alternative paths can then be added (using different coloured wool, cards and tees) to make a complicated multiple path outline similar to that shown in Figure 5.

Oral reading

In the past, oral reading has been somewhat over-emphasised in classrooms. Compared with silent reading, a person does very little oral reading in a lifetime and school reading programs should give priority to silent reading and the acquisition of meaning. Nevertheless, as Sloan and Latham (1981, p. 133) have noted:

> The ability to read aloud with expression is an important attribute of any competent reader. Many occupations and social situations require reasonable fluency in this aspect of reading. A person who is unable to read a report, a prepared talk, minutes of meetings, and occasional snippets of print that are often shared formally and informally is at a disadvantage. Accordingly, the development of a reader's proficiency at reading aloud is an important part of a reading program and must not be neglected.

These authors suggest that, in school settings, after readers have read selections silently and grasped their meanings, they



Symbols

p = pause
p^2 = pause for two counts, etc.
< = louder — the inclination of the lines indicates how quickly
> = softer
~~~ = very slowly
v^1 = voice 1; i.e., a voice you have practised such as an accent for characterisation. (Such voice characterisation should not be overdone to the point where the listener is distracted from the meaning. Three or four different voices will be most effective.)
/ = a rising inflexion at the end of a sentence
\ = a falling inflexion
G = indicates a particular gesture — notes for which can he written in the margin — for example head roll, hand movement, eye contact, etc.
---- = emphasis — a short line is placed beneath each word needing special emphasis.

JACK HAS A LUCKY ESCAPE
Traditional Tale

There was once a poor boy,^{p} named Jack,^{p} who lived with his mother in a little village. Jack used to go round the country selling butter made by his mother. One day Jack met a witch, who grabbed him by the shoulder^{p} and said,^{p}

v^1 Crackly, mean — 'Now, my boy, give me some of your butter, or else I'll pop you in my bag.'

Bold v^2 — 'You will not!' said Jack,^{p} as bold as anything.

act the out — So the witch grabbed his legs^{p} and popped him into her bag. Then she ^{G}slung the bag over her shoulder and went on her way. v^2 'There's no point in struggling', Jack said to himself,^{p} and went to sleep inside the bag. now quieter

Figure 6. Working up a prepared reading
(Sloan and Latham, 1981, pp. 139-40.)
~~~

may, for a purpose such as the presentation of a book review, a play, or some other sharing activity, need to prepare the reading so that the presentation is expressive and stimulating to listen to. It is therefore important to teach children how to rehearse for such reading. They should be shown how to score their scripts, using symbols or devices of their own choice.

A groupwork schedule

The organisational plan for this groupwork is summarised in Figure 7. The children in each group are informed in advance about what they will be doing each session by a classroom group guide.

SESSION	TEACHER INTERACTIVE	TEACHER SUPERVISED	TEACHER INDEPENDENT
1	Pick/Path		Plot Profile Writing Oral Reading
2	Plot Profile	Pick/Path	Writing Oral Reading
3	Oral Reading	Pick/Path	Writing Plot Profile
4	Writing	Oral Reading Plot Profile	Pick/Path
5	Oral Reading Plot Profile	Writing	Pick/Path
6	Pick/Path	Oral Reading Plot Profile Writing	

Figure 7. Groupwork schedule

Session 1

During this session the majority of pupils will be involved primarily in independent silent reading.

Plot Profile Group

Pupils browse among the variety of fairy tales which now populate the "reading corner". These include favourites brought in by the children from home, copies of the tales read aloud by the teacher, the modern fairy tales listed above and perhaps also foreign language versions of fairy tales.

Writing Group

This group will also browse in the reading corner with the object of collecting jottings that may help in composing their own modern fairy tale. The teacher may provide some suggestions, e.g. "Space Age Fairy Tales" and stimulating displays such as a "magic mirror", posters of castles, dungeons, frogs etc.

Oral Reading Group

A listening post will be used to allow these children to hear a dramatic reading of one of the lesser-known fairy tales. At the conclusion of the reading the teacher has recorded some comments and questions asking the children to reflect on *how* the story was read. The tape informs children that such reading takes a good deal of practice and preparation and invites the children to listen to a second story, this time following a "scored" script used by the reader in rehearsing for this reading.

Pick-a-Path Group

During this initial session the children in this group work with the teacher, who introduces them to the peg board format of the multiple path outline as shown in Figure 5. They first experiment with selection of different story lines by removing or reversing the unwanted cards. Then they add cards to increase the range of possible stories. After this they work with the teacher to reassemble new cards, wool and tees to map the basic path of a known story and generate additional alternative paths for that story.

Session 2

Plot Profile Group

Pupils work with the teacher. Following discussion of the most appealing tales, the teacher and children choose one which is popular among the group and, through further discussion of why it is popular, the teacher introduces the children to the concept of the plot profile. The teacher and pupils together create a plot profile for the selected tale.

Writing Group

Some pupils in this group will have started on their drafts for their modern fairy tale, while some will still be browsing, jotting, thinking and talking about what to write.

Oral Reading Group

These pupils now have their turn to browse among the reading corner's collection of modern fairy tales. By the end of the session they should have decided (perhaps in partnership with other group members) which tale they are going to choose for the production of a dramatic oral reading.

Pick-a-Path Group

Following agreement on the selection of a favourite conventional fairy tale, this group now attempts to construct an event map on the peg board and create alternative event sequences. The teacher provides assistance to the group only when called upon or via a brief "roving conference".

Session 3

Oral Reading Group

Children discuss their selections with the teacher. Segments from each selection are read aloud by the teacher and pupils. The rationales for the various oral interpretations are discussed. The pupils and teacher work co-operatively to "score" copies of the text to aid in rehearsing for an oral reading production.

Pick-a-Path Group

This group continues work on its multiple path outline for its chosen story. If this is completed, children may increase the number of additional cards to place on the tees at each choice point.

Writing Group

Children continue to work on their story drafts. Some may be considering possible publishing formats.

Plot Profile Group

Pupils return to the reading corner and review the modern fairy tales in order to choose one for which they will construct their own plot profile. Having chosen their stories, the children are encouraged to seek partners who have chosen the same story, if possible. If time permits, pupils begin their major incident summary.

Session 4

Writing Group

"Writers' Circle"—small group and individual teacher and peer conferences to review/stimulate progress on composition of a modern fairy tale.

Plot Profile Group and Oral Reading Group

Pupils draft their plot profiles (collaboratively where possible). In doing this they join with the children in the Oral Reading Group who are annotating a copy of their chosen story in preparation for a dramatic reading. Pupils from both groups who are doing the same story are encouraged to share their ideas. In this way they should gain insights into the way the tensions in the plot development are communicated effectively through the text.

Pick-a-Path Group

Each pupil decides which of the alternative outlines he or she will elaborate into a complete story and begins the first draft.

Session 5

Plot Profile Group and **Oral Reading Group**

Both groups work with the teacher. New sub-groups are formed on the basis of children who are working on the same story. Children share their insights into the story, derived separately from plot profiles and prepared oral reading. The teacher elicits from the children their understanding of the way in which language is used in characterisation, the creation of atmosphere and the patterning of plot development.

Writing Group

Children in this group will be making decisions about proceeding toward publication. Some may already be working on the final "published" version. Others may still be editing and revising their drafts. Those who do not proceed to publication may be exploring alternative modes of expression. These could include scripts for classroom video production, fairy tale limericks etc.

Pick-a-Path Group

Children continue drafting the elaboration of their chosen story path in preparation for sharing with other group members and the teacher in the subsequent session.

Session 6

Pick-a-Path Group

"Writers' Circle"—the children in this group "conference" with the teacher to discuss the various story versions created from the multiple path outline.

Plot Profile Group

Pupils complete the final (public) version of their plot profiles for display to the whole class.

Oral Reading Group

Children record their prepared reading onto cassette tape. This may need to be done in the "hat room", the "wet area", outside, in the reading loft, on the verandah etc.

Writing Group

Some children may be proceeding with the production of the published version of their modern fairy tale. Others may explore the production of promotional publicity material for their friends' stories. These might include "classified ads" relating to the story, skill profiles of characters, report cards on certain characters etc. (Johnson and Louis, 1985).

Regrouping

The products of these activities can then become the basis for a three session rotational groupwork plan which allows all of the children to share and enjoy the work of their peers.

SESSION	TEACHER INTERACTIVE	TEACHER SUPERVISED	TEACHER INDEPENDENT	
	(A) Plot Profile	(B) Pick/Path	(C) Oral Reading	(D) Writing Modern Tale
7	C	D	A	B
8	B	A	D	C
9	D	C	B	A

Figure 8. Regrouping plan

Over the three sessions, as each group comes to the teacher, the children first of all create with the teacher a simple plot profile for a well-known fairy tale, e.g. *The Three Little Pigs*. The teacher then distributes copies of the pupil-constructed profiles produced by the previous Plot Profile Group, which have been cut up so that the incident summaries (in their component pieces) are separated from the graphic representation of plot tension. The children reassemble these (rereading the text where necessary) and compare them with the intact versions of their peers' work.

As each group visits the Pick-a-Path peg board, the children look at the multiple path outline created by the original group members, pick a path for themselves and draft an elaboration of this story, based on their chosen path.

Each group also has a chance to listen to the tape-recorded productions of the oral reading group and to read the published stories from the writing group.

Principles of groupwork organisation

As more teachers become committed to personalised learning in whole language classrooms, a variety of new forms of grouping pupils for learning is occurring. Gradually, new guidelines are emerging which are beginning to achieve more precise definition.

Composition of groups

- There are no permanently set groups.
- Groups are periodically created, modified or disbanded in order to meet new needs as they arise.
- There are times when there is only one group—consisting of *all* pupils.
- Group size will vary from 2 or 3 to 9 or 10 or more, depending on the group's purpose.

Management

- Pupils should encounter some choices relating to how, when and what work is to be done so that they are given as much responsibility as possible for their own learning.
- Pupil commitment is enhanced if they know how the group work is related to the overall class program.
- Children should be able to evaluate and recognise the progress they make and the teacher's assessment of it.
- There should be a clear strategy for supervision of task performance.
- Teachers continuously monitor pupils' progress through brief anecdotal records which are accumulated over the year.

Nature of group tasks

- Learning experiences relate to whole texts and genuine communicative experiences rather than fragmented exercises.
- Task structure and level of demand is appropriate to the needs and interests of the pupils.
- Directions for completing tasks and class work routines are clear and can be referred to if forgotten. This should include options for those who have finished required activities.
- There must be a clear and distinct method of coding or labelling and storage so that pupils can obtain materials appropriate to them without disturbing others.
- A variety of activities should be included.

Co-operative learning—beyond classroom groups

The possible configurations of groupwork organisation are greatly increased as teachers learn to manage material resources such as learning centres and classroom computers as well as human resources such as resource teachers, teacher aides, librarians and parent helpers. Many teachers use organisational techniques such as "contracting" to "de-group" classrooms in progressing further toward open education. This can occur as both teachers and pupils develop their appreciation of the difference between teaching and learning. The learner achieves some choice in negotiating what is to be learned, and how, and then is more likely to accept responsibility to engage in that learning process.

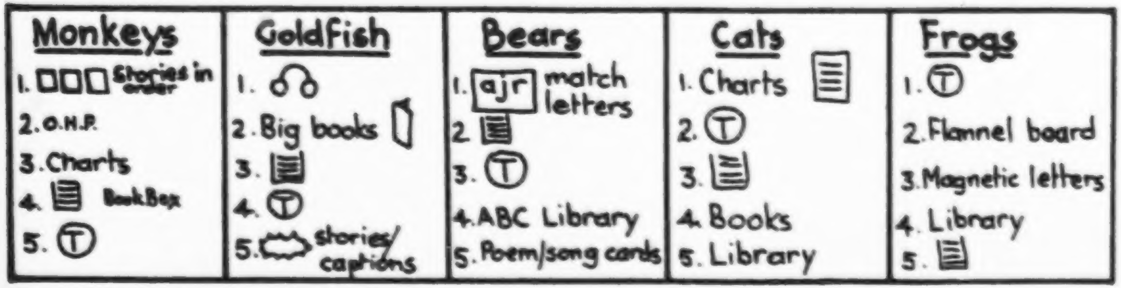
This kind of approach to classroom management has been used successfully with quite young children. The P.E.T.A. publication *Towards a Reading-Writing Classroom* (Turbill and Butler, 1984) documented the groupwork approach taken by

Maxine Murphy, who works in a team teaching situation with about 100 five year olds at Conifer Grove School in Auckland, New Zealand:

> I prepare a chart for each day's activities. It tells each group the four or five activities I expect them to do that day. In the 45 minute period, they know they can choose to spend as much time as they need at any one activity. Generally, they follow the activities I suggest, but they know that they don't have to do everything if they don't want to.
>
> It's important, of course, that I know who has done what, so that I can guide the children if they get into a rut. At the end of every Language Workshop I ask the children to indicate which activities they did and I quickly note their names beside the activity. I find that sometimes the children like the freedom and security of staying with one activity for a while, especially if they are involved in writing an interesting piece. This does not worry me, as long as it doesn't go on for too long. (*Turbill and Butler*, 1984, pp. 26-7)

Rather than indicating when certain groups will undertake experiences which are primarily teacher interactive, teacher supervised or teacher independent, Maxine has included the three management modes within the list of choices for each group. She is therefore able to handle the number of children requiring close interaction with her by moving from group to group. The activities undertaken by each child are noted and most of the evaluation is done while the children are working. Cumulative records are updated with each child once per week, and this information is used in negotiating activities to be done in the following sessions.

There are many other approaches to grouping and co-operative learning which are consistent with the views expressed in this chapter, e.g. "adoptive classes", where each child in a Year 5 class "adopts" a partner in a Year 1 class. On a rotational basis a quarter of the Year 5 class visits the Year 1 partners for one session each day to read to them etc. Correspondingly, for other sessions, groups of Year 1 pupils join the Year 5 class to enjoy a play, singing etc. Thus for one session at least each day the teacher has her/his class decreased by twenty-five percent. And this is not to mention the positive benefits to the children of participating in a co-operative learning enterprise with other children and their teachers.



Monkeys	Goldfish	Bears	Cats	Frogs
1. ☐☐☐ Stories in order	1. 🎧	1. ajr match letters	1. Charts ▤	1. Ⓣ
2. O.H.P.	2. Big books ▯	2. ▤	2. Ⓣ	2. Flannel board
3. Charts	3. ▤	3. Ⓣ	3. ▤	3. Magnetic letters
4. ▤ BookBox	4. Ⓣ	4. ABC Library	4. Books	4. Library
5. Ⓣ	5. ☁ stories/captions	5. Poem/song cards	5. Library	5. ▤

Figure 9. Maxine's daily activities chart
(From *Turbill and Butler*, 1984, p. 27)

Conclusion

The most important element in any classroom is the human element—both children and teachers. Children need sensitive teachers who are well informed about the processes of literacy development and who are committed to making the classroom a personally satisfying learning environment for every child. Such teachers need to feel that their goals are realistic and achievable. Greater understanding of co-operative, small-group learning will assist in meeting the needs of both teachers and pupils.

The importance of children's own experiential and language backgrounds, as well as the increasing parameters and range of individual differences in regular classrooms, demands a personalised approach to literacy development. Attempts at moving toward more open, individualised and small-group learning in classrooms can be supported through the co-operative efforts of parents, teachers, administrators and academics. The key issue is the importance of professional educators maintaining a personal and individual response to the developing needs of young learners in the face of pressure toward uniform, "mechanical", pre-packaged "solutions".

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Contracting

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A contract is a written agreement between teacher and learner in which the learner undertakes to complete tasks in a stated time on his or her own initiative. The author suggests some desirable outcomes and outlines the history of contracting and the rationale for it. In this chapter, examples of different contracts are given and there are interviews with teachers who use this system to educational advantage.

CONTRACTS ARE AN AID to classroom activity, learner involvement and independence, and teacher satisfaction. They can be a boon to both children and teachers. Some teachers have not yet tried any form of contracting, some have experimented a bit but not found a system which really suits them, while other teachers are devoted contract users. What is it about a teacher and child using a written agreement of tasks to be undertaken which so appeals to the devotee?

There are several common themes running through the literature on the use of contracts which reappear in discussions with teachers who are currently using this system:

- The uniqueness of children means that they learn in different ways, have varying interests, and work at different speeds.
- Independence and initiative are traits to be encouraged within the school environment.
- Children are often required to waste an inordinate amount of time waiting (for lessons, for materials, for problems to be solved) rather than being enabled to "get on with it".
- The teacher must be able to organise so that there is time and opportunity to work with individuals and small groups while other children are constructively occupied.

Each of these educational desiderata is catered for through the use of contracts.

Given these desirable outcomes, what are contracts and how have they become part of an educator's repertoire?

Historical background and rationale

One of the first major references to contracting in educating is in Parkhurst's 1922 publication, *Education on the Dalton Plan.* The book explains a "laboratory" system which was begun in the U.S. and quickly spread to schools in England. Professor Nunn's introduction establishes the context for discussion: "*The central question about teaching and learning may be put thus:* **what is the proper distribution of initiative and responsibility between teacher and taught?**" This philosophical issue is still at the heart of discussions about power in the classroom, and how much control students should have over their own learning. The professor's comments also indicate that, while more than sixty years have passed, some of the quandaries which face teachers are still the same.

> The timetable originated in the assumption that the teacher should dictate what his pupils are to do at every hour of their school lives, and the class-system in the belief that he may ignore the varied modes and rates of movement which distinguish one mind from another, and may treat five and twenty minds (or a hundred) as if they were one.
>
> (Nunn, in Parkhurst, 1922, xiii)

As a document in educational history, Parkhurst's book is fascinating. It traces the development of her ideas through the struggle of organising a one room, seven grade, country school; through her work with Maria Montessori in Italy; through the application of her "laboratory plan in an upgraded school for crippled boys" (p. 12) to the use of her scheme in Massachusetts at the Dalton High School. However, for present purposes we must stick with the task at hand, which is the isolation of particular points from this early work which can help today's teachers think through the rationale for, and implementation of, a **contract system**. For example, Parkhurst reassures teachers that "freedom is not licence, still less indiscipline. It is, in fact, the very reverse of both" (p. 15). However, **freedom** is the first principle of this plan:

> From the academic, or cultural point of view, the pupil must be made free to continue without interruption his work upon any subject in which he is absorbed because, when interested, he is mentally keener, more alert, and more capable of mastering any difficulty that may arise in the course of his study. Under the new plan there are no

> bells to tear him away at an appointed hour and chain him pedagogically to another subject and another teacher. Thus treated, the energy of the pupil automatically runs to waste. (p. 16)

The second principle is **co-operation,** with a focus on "real social living" and a sense of community.

In practice, children under twelve years of age physically signed a contract, while older children did not. The curriculum was divided into subject lots; contracts had a month's work stated. Teachers specialised and taught in one of the areas with children from a range of grades attending their lab simultaneously. The student discussed the program with an adviser, agreeing to spend more time earlier in the morning on weaker subjects. During the three hour morning period (9 a.m.-12 noon) children were free to study with anyone else who was in the same lab on a similar task. Children missing several days through illness simply picked up work where they had left off, without being disadvantaged by the pace of an on-going group. Work completed was recorded on a graph, while the teacher maintained a weekly comparison graph of all work being completed by the children in that class.

Subject sharing took place for an hour each day (12 noon-1 p.m.) when the teacher could introduce new material and students could share queries on their assignment. (Different subject each morning: maths, English, history, geography, science. Music, art, movement, cooking, became afternoon subjects.) Parkhurst applied this system in many situations, but saw it as not applicable for children under nine years of age.

Parkhurst emphasised the importance of setting appropriate tasks for the students:

> Few children at any age know instinctively how to work. As the object of the Dalton Plan is primarily to teach them this, the instructor should be careful at the outset not to expect too much. (p. 48)

The tasks should not simply be workbook pages or set readings, but should include statements of purpose, suggestions, guiding questions, experiments, written work and points where reference to the teacher would be helpful. She suggested that proposed assignments should be posted on a staff board one week before being given to students, so that staff would be informed about what each other expected, unrealistic demands by over-enthusiastic specialists could be toned down by colleagues, and staff could see possibilities for cross-curriculum integration.

The scheme was not intended as a model for use, but as a starting point for others to apply in their own circumstances. Many of the ideas were applied, while others became unrecognisable (e.g. subject specialists with all students doing the same material simultaneously). In England the 12-1 p.m. lessons were not appropriate because of the larger number of core subjects in secondary school, so one full morning and three afternoons were turned over to teacher-led subject instruction. A Leeds headmaster adapted the system to an upper primary school and had contracts set weekly rather than monthly. Subsequent assessment at all levels showed the children's testable achievement to compare with and slightly exceed those in other systems, and characteristics such as "capability, initiative, and power to take responsibility" (p. 176) commendable. Children's opinions were also quoted at length, supporting the system enthusiastically.

Many of the ideas can be adapted and applied usefully in today's schools.

Moving more quickly through the historical development, it can be summarised that such an approach reflected the humanistic orientation of John Dewey and his followers. The late 1960s and early 1970s saw educators such as Herb Kohl, John Holt and Jonathon Kozol agonising about the state of the American school system and calling for alternatives. G.B. Leonard proposed an almost Utopian solution in *Education and Ecstasy*, in which a school open to the community involved children working on their own interests at their own pace. Developing somewhat earlier, the English integrated day system, as described in the Plowden Report and encouraged by the

Bullock Report on literacy, used a form of organisation conducive to contracts. However, from this period there is not much literature devoted specifically to contracts. When this form of organisation is referred to, the texts are like those of Day's *Open Learning*, which sets out to describe an environment which is "child-centred and invites independent and group learning through exploration and investigation" (1975, p. 1) or Pflum and Waterman's which describes ways to individualise programs (1974, p. 103). In the late 1970s, most of the literature on contracts appeared in the *special education* literature, as a way of coping with children with obviously specialised needs.

In the 1980s, the literature has acquired language related to "negotiation" and "empowering" the learner (see, for example, Boomer, 1982, 1983). These developments are all based on a desire to have learner meet teacher at the point of that learner's interest, need and ability, rather than in terms of a group's need or a preconceived curriculum timeline.

> *However, for a teacher to create an interactive environment, a learning situation which is relevant to learners, a range of organisational strategies is necessary. For many teachers who have limited training in organising, or who have not had support in their efforts to explore a range of organisational styles, developing such a range can be a daunting task.*

The use of contracts is often associated with flexible use of space and furniture in a classroom, particularly including learning centres: bays or table arrangements set with theme or subject oriented tasks, activities or problems for children to pursue independently or in small groups. Participation at such a work area sometimes during the week may in fact be one of the items on children's contracts. Provision of study carrels, audio-visual viewing/listening corners, withdrawal areas and cosy, cushioned reading spaces are also often associated with rooms in which, at best, part of the time is devoted to individually paced work. Continuing classes by altering teaching spaces (removing walls, acquiring coat rack or corridor spaces) often facilitates the more varied use of teaching/learning spaces (Fleet *et al*, 1976).

Contracting in practice

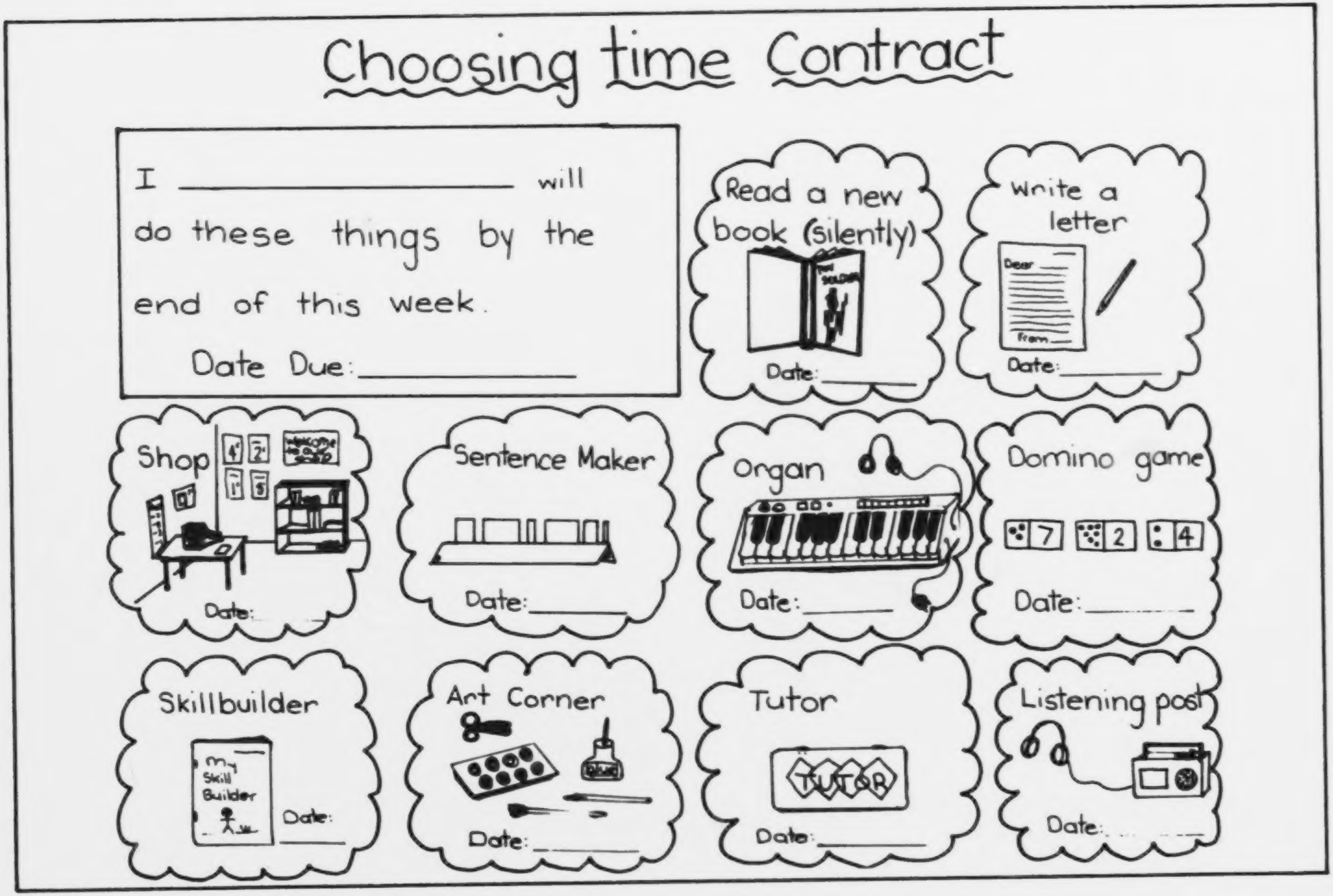
So that brings us to how to do it, and who's doing it well. Let's look at some examples of contracts, in order to get a visual image of what is possible.

"Choosing time" (Figure 1) would be held for one hour every day. Each child has the same contract but is free to choose the order in which the activities will be done. When a child completes an activity, he or she fills in the date and colours in the relevant drawing.

The "class contract" (Figure 2) is an extension of the "choosing time" contract and it would be placed on the class notice board. When a child finishes an activity he or she marks off the relevant space. Instead of using initials for the days of the week, a simpler system would be to colour code, e.g. Monday = red, Tuesday = blue etc. A monitor could change the textas daily so that only textas of the appropriate colour would be available.

This contract enables the teacher to see how the whole class has used the time or to observe individuals or grouping of children and to see also which activities are popular/not popular.

These examples were created by Cathie Matthews, a young teacher who has used them in her teaching. The possibilities for other approaches, however, are endless. While the style of contract depends on the teacher's and child's purposes, the



Choosing time Contract

I ______________ will do these things by the end of this week.

Date Due: ______________

Read a new book (silently) Date: ________

Write a letter Date: ________

Shop Date: ________

Sentence Maker Date: ________

Organ Date: ________

Domino game Date: ________

Skillbuilder Date: ________

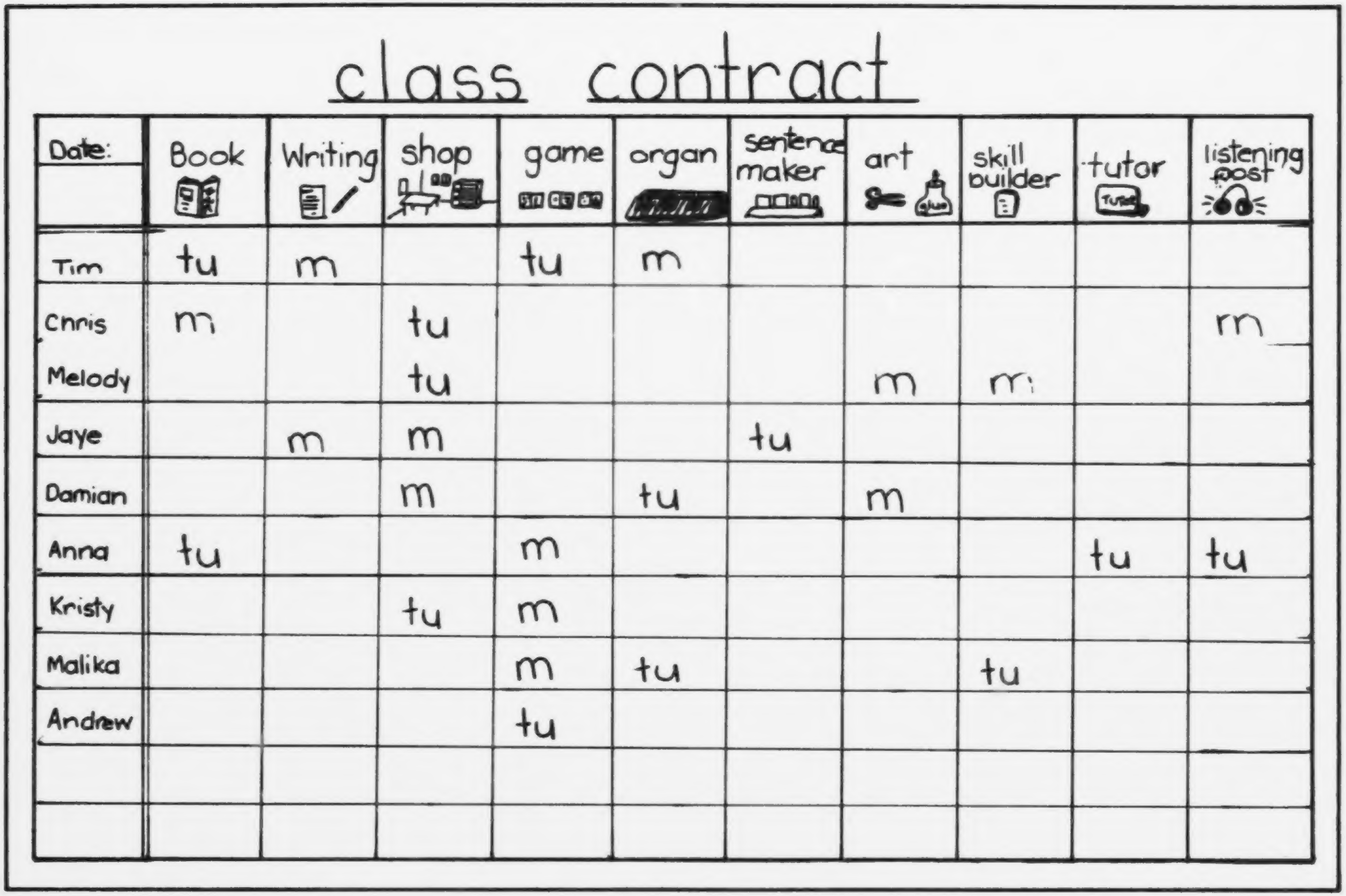
Art Corner Date: ________

Tutor Date: ________

Listening post Date: ________

Dear
From
Welcome to our Shop
7
2
4
My Skill Builder
TUTOR

Figure 1. "Choosing Time" Contract



class contract

Date:	Book	Writing	shop	game	organ	sentence maker	art	skill builder	tutor	listening post
Tim	tu	m		tu	m					
Chris	m		tu							m
Melody			tu				m	m		
Jaye		m	m			tu				
Damian			m		tu		m			
Anna	tu			m					tu	tu
Kristy			tu	m						
Malika				m	tu			tu		
Andrew				tu						

Figure 2. Class Contract

actual designs are limited only by imagination. Older children could assist in devising their *own* formats. There are also examples of contracts in the literature which can serve as starting points. (Note, for example, several designs in Fleet & Martin, 1984, pp. 60-69.)

The contract shown in Figure 3 could be used with individuals who need to improve a certain skill. Stencils are made and filled in to suit individuals when required. This contract may be useful when conferencing with a child about his/her process writing.

The contract shown in Figure 4 may be used to motivate children to complete their work. When an activity is finished, the child cuts it out and pastes it in the appropriate space on the right.

N.B. The examples shown in Figures 3 and 4 have been adapted from Kaplan (1980).

The teachers speak

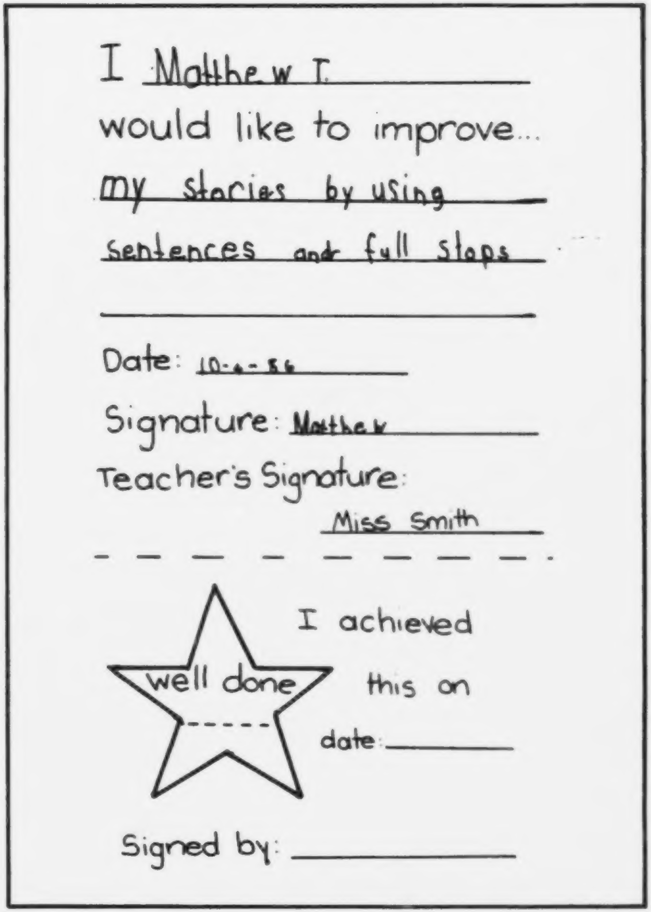
What do teachers who are using contracts have to say about them? To give some examples of possibilities to supplement the material, the author selected several interviews. While the explanations are interesting in their entirety, space does not permit full transcription. However, some edited portions should give readers a general feeling of two very different situations, both of which are working well for the teachers and children concerned. These interviews constitute guidelines for two different ways to operate contract programs.

Interview 1:

DOREEN STOKES, *Principal*
Riley Street Infants, Surry Hills, N.S.W.
Year 2, 20 children

As a "teaching mistress", Doreen finds a contract system essential to enable her to fulfil her varying roles:

This is something for them *to go on with so I can get on with it. Otherwise they'd all be sitting there waiting for me*



I Matthew T.
would like to improve...
my stories by using
sentences and full stops

Date: 10-6-86
Signature: Matthew
Teacher's Signature:
Miss Smith

well done
I achieved this on
date:
Signed by:

Figure 3. Specific Skills Contract

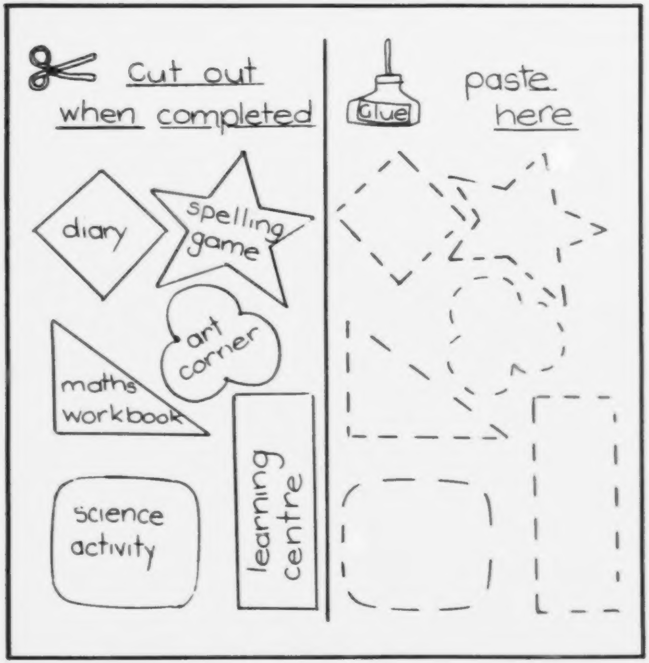
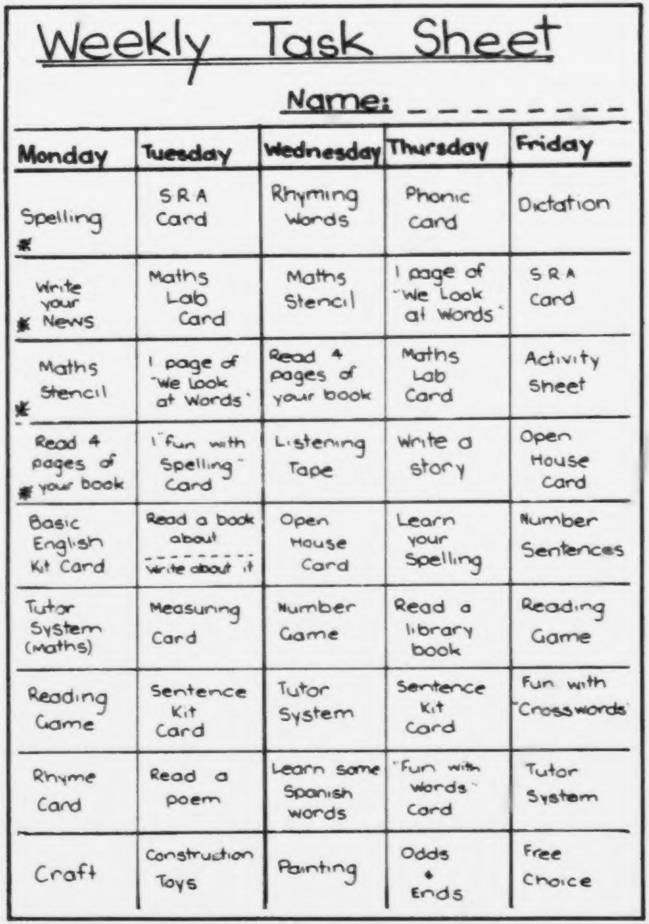


Figure 4. Motivational Contract

. . . this way I can hear everybody read. I can check through their number. I can "conference" them in their writing in the course of a week, whereas I couldn't do it if the children were waiting for me—plus parents, plus students, plus phone calls, plus the secretary! But that's the only way I can function.



Weekly Task Sheet

Name: _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Spelling *	S.R.A Card	Rhyming Words	Phonic card	Dictation
Write your * News	Maths Lab Card	Maths Stencil	1 page of "We Look at Words"	S.R.A Card
Maths Stencil *	1 page of "We look at Words"	Read 4 pages of your book	Maths Lab Card	Activity Sheet
Read 4 pages of * your book	"Fun with Spelling" Card	Listening Tape	Write a story	Open House Card
Basic English Kit Card	Read a book about write about it	Open House Card	Learn your Spelling	Number Sentences
Tutor System (maths)	Measuring Card	Number Game	Read a library book	Reading Game
Reading Game	Sentence Kit Card	Tutor System	Sentence Kit Card	Fun with "Crosswords"
Rhyme Card	Read a poem	Learn some Spanish words	"Fun with Words" Card	Tutor System
Craft	Construction Toys	Painting	Odds + Ends	Free Choice

Figure 5. "Bingo"-type Task Sheet

An interesting contract system is one based on a “Bingo”-type sheet (Figure 5) which is distributed to all children in the class. The contract is used on a daily routine, “around other happenings”, the main ones being:

	Mon.	**Tues.**	**Wed.**	**Thurs.**	**Fri.**
a.m.	Spanish	Library	Scripture	Spanish	
p.m.		Park ESL		ESL	Movement Spanish

TV programs are recorded, to be played back later, at convenient times. During very busy times, like Monday morning, the work which must be completed first is asterisked: *All the other days they realise, of course, they have to get onto the hard core stuff, but they can still do that in any order they like. Parents are also coming in to work with the computer, and the children are often involved with that.*

Specific items on the contract:

- “Meaning card” is done with a partner; better readers are paired with less advanced to read the card and then help them work together.
- When reading a “topic book”, the children must find out something they didn't know before.
- If there's a queue at the maths cards, for instance, children go onto something else. Such tasks are initially ability-assigned tasks: *They know their level; they know where they're at, so they get on with it.*
- When reading, children can read to a partner, themselves, or the teacher.
- Number games they choose themselves. Tutor tasks the teacher chooses; children ask when they are ready.
- Craft is set up all the time as an option when other work is finished.
- Children help each other with Spanish from all the words displayed around the room.
- When work has been corrected it goes into a box.

Doreen goes through the new maths material with a small group before the written work is assigned. She is working individually with children or with small groups whenever children are occupied with contracts. Social studies, music and sport are taken with everybody.

How do the children cope?

They're battling. There's very rarely a day that they would get through it all; it's there as an extension. There are nine activities there, which is quite a big task, but everyone always has something to do, even the most able.

I'm finding they get through the Wednesday program very quickly, so I'll have to rethink that. Next term I will be putting in dictionary skills. When I find they're ready for something, I put that in, and I might take out something else. If I find they're able to get through everything, I might introduce a project book for them on any topics they're interested in—to find their own information, which is reading and writing, seeking information and putting it into their own words.

I find that on Thursday they like to get into the story writing straight away. I really don't care if they don't do anything much more than that because the “write a story” covers a writing lesson, spelling, creativity. It covers many things that are far more valuable than doing a sentence kit card or a phonic card.

This is a Year 2 class, but you've also used this system with first class, haven't you?

Yes—then I started with one day—say Wednesday—with a half sheet and three to four tasks. They'd learn to do those tasks in any order in the assigned time period. They need to be able to read and write for this approach so the contracts were introduced gradually, one by one, as the year was going along and the children gained the independence and skills. Then they can jump from one day to a full week's sheet; once they understand it they can go on.

How do you start off? How did you begin with this Year 2 class?

I start with one day on the board. The children have to learn the names of the tasks and the objects. They have to be introduced to each activity. After about five weeks, one third of the class is on single day half-sheets and the rest are on the full week. To be able to do this, they:

1. *have to feel secure,*
2. *have to be used to me, my standards and discipline,*
3. *have to make and understand the rules of the classroom,*
4. *have to understand the need for independence.*

I put the responsibility on them. I tell them that each piece of work they bring to me must be their best, so they must look at it intelligently.

The first unit of work is always: "How can we all work together?" They make the rules. They start very raw but I have heard each one read in the previous November, and I have the evaluation from their previous teacher, so I have something to build on.

In the first five weeks you have to tell them exactly *what it's all about. Once they get the message they know that I am there to help them and later on there are other children in the class they can ask. They have to get over the awe of "The Principal" and appreciate they can come to me any time.*

What are the advantages of using this kind of contract system?

I have no failures whatsoever. I don't have any behaviour problems because no one is failing. Children don't need to prove themselves. They are achieving at their own level, so they're very happy with themselves and they don't need to go up and thump the child next to them for my attention because what they're doing is challenging and they're engrossed in what they're doing—also getting it right! Which leads to "I can try harder" and on from that.

The self-esteem cycle?

Right. It works for me particularly in my situation. I also feel very happy about it. I use the aims of DUSSO which are, "to ensure that the atmosphere in the classroom is conducive to the development of each child's self-esteem, and by so doing, to meet social, emotional, and academic needs". That came right out of the DUSSO book, but I feel it's me.

They still belong to a group. We do things together. I'm trying to develop them socially so they can help each other, which I still think this system does.

Have you used this kind of system with a larger class?

Oh yes, the larger the better! This is the only way I've found to be able to work with them individually—particularly in "process-conference" writing or maths. You have to have time to sit and talk to the child.

Any disadvantages?

No. But I think a young teacher trying it would have to monitor it very, very carefully. I know these children inside out. I know who might try to get out of something and I can be aware of it.

So a new teacher would need to check that the children were actually doing the work?

Exactly. You can have little checklists for the children. It's a lot of documentation. And the teacher would need to be very careful. She would need to say, "Of course, you would need to do these things before . . ."

The new teacher would also have to check what the children were able *to do. For example, many of these children didn't understand rhyming words, and how the sounds could be useful to them in working out and spelling words, so I needed to introduce and then give them practice in that. You've got to know the children.*

Is there anything else you could suggest for people trying for the first time?

You have to look at what resources you have in the room. You can make your own resources. You can have very little in *the room and still make it work. Of course, having laboratories does help! I wouldn't start off with it straight away until I knew the children and their abilities. It has to be a gradual thing, in the right atmosphere, where no one feels threatened.*

Interview 2:

Wenona Junior School
Walker Street, North Sydney, N.S.W.
Family grouped—48 children
JUDI BLAIR (*Head Teacher*)
VANESSA KING
WENDY SHEPHERD

In this team-taught, open-plan infants program, the children are set assignments by the teacher in individual books once a month. The next week's tasks might be written in from mid-week onwards, but the children only complete one week's work at a time.

What are your basic categories?
Judi: *Well, there's language, including news and story writing, sounds work—anything related to words, basically. It's not closely categorised at all. I find it's easier for the children if I number them. If they see they have ten assignments, then several days later they can see they have three. The whole idea is that the children budget their times. If they feel they have time to go play, paint, make things during Monday, they can. Most of them like to get their work done and have Friday morning free.*

The major categories are language and number. Another is for specific tasks. For instance, I have two children who need extra gross and fine motor activities. We put that down to make sure they're actually doing it and not avoiding it.

How do you start with Kindergarten children who can't yet read?
Judi: *They bring their assignment books to us and we ask them to choose activities. Then they go and do the task. When it's finished, we show them where it's written and mark it off. They learn that when something is completed and corrected they can mark it off. Older children help them to find the right books or place in their assignments.*

Does it actually start from Day One?
Judi: *Yes. The very first day all of them have their assignment books. Those coming back from the previous year know what they're doing and simply carry on. The youngest five in each group are the only ones who have to learn something new.*

How many things would be expected for each child?
Judi: *For the youngest, by mid-year, about six or seven. Those in the middle tend to vary more, we find. They don't all get through the same amount of work. The older girls would have about ten things.*

Is there much work done with, say, pairs of children, or is it mostly individual?
Judi: *We've started them reading in pairs. Some of them do their comprehension tasks together. Discussing really helps them understand. Two days a week some of the older children work together as a reading group; they're a bit more responsible and able to organise themselves. They also read to us every day on an individual basis, but that's not written down.*
Vanessa: *I also do a fair bit of practical maths in twos and threes when I've been teaching a new concept, so that the children get practice before using a workbook. Each week there's a new concept coming in, something being practical from the previous week and something being reviewed from before.*

Wendy, from your point of view as a first year teacher who had been briefly introduced to contracts before, how have you found working with them here?
Wendy: *Very good. The children need the contracts as a boundary for what they can do; they feel safe within that; they don't feel safe not knowing what's expected of them.*

Do you think that is then limiting their own independence, their own initiatives?
Wendy: *No. You see a great improvement in the little ones during the first term. It helps them to organise themselves, mentally. It gives them a maturity that other children of the same age mightn't have. For example, I have a Year 2 girl who had come from a conventional situation and it took her about three weeks to settle and to realise that you just don't float around, that you do your work. But having adjusted to the system, she now enjoys it. She enjoys being able to sit and write for a whole hour if she likes. That's really exciting.*

She realises she's not constrained by the environment?
Wendy: *Yes. She loves writing, and within that there's a self-discipline: "Oh, I suppose I'd better do some of my other work". You're not imposing a restriction—she's organising herself.*
Judi: *And they really like having a goal for the end of the week . . . They make the decision when they're going to do that work; that's what they like.*

You have quite a select group of students here. Would you say your contract system is working largely because you have an advantaged group of students?
Judi: *No. I think it would work in any case, but to use* exactly *this system you would need fairly small class sizes.*
Wendy: *If you're not getting the support of the parents and the staff then you'll flounder, but if you have everyone pulling together and realising what a benefit it is to the students, then that seems to make it work.*

What are the disadvantages of the system?
Wendy: *With children with learning difficulties, I need to get to them first thing in the morning when they're fresh and I'm fresh. They need more one-to-one and in-depth talking, and it's too late if you leave it till the end of the morning when they've just been floating.*

By the end of the day this system might be more wearing on the teacher, but you get the children to be more enquiring. You have them working and being really inquisitive because they evaluate what they are doing. And that, in this situation, is what you are able to do—evaluate on the spot. I think if you're getting the children to ask **why** *all the time, then you're on the right road.*

Disadvantaged children are better off in this situation than in the traditional, but you have to modify their choice because they only want to do what they're good at—naturally—and so they don't want to be bothered with the rest of it. But they get no less attention in this system, due to the emphasis on individualising learning.

How much of the day do the children have free to do contract work?
Judi: *Most of the day. School doesn't start until 9.30 but they can come in earlier and use the games or paint, but no contract work which requires teacher interaction. Then we have quarter-hour gym, then assembly; so they work through from about 10.30 to 12.30. We have about ten minutes of group singing or whatever before lunch. The afternoon is also usually contract work except for the last quarter-hour story time.*
Vanessa: *The person who is taking group assembly plans all those activities. We rotate that every two weeks.*

What would you highlight as potential problem areas for a new teacher?
Judi: *The biggest problem that students or new teachers have is keeping track of what each child is doing. It's very easy for a child to disappear for half an hour and you're not aware of what that child is doing if not highly motivated. In our system a child may be working in any room—not necessarily in one spot.*
Vanessa: *The children who wander off tend to be the ones who don't finish assignments. If you find the same thing is being*

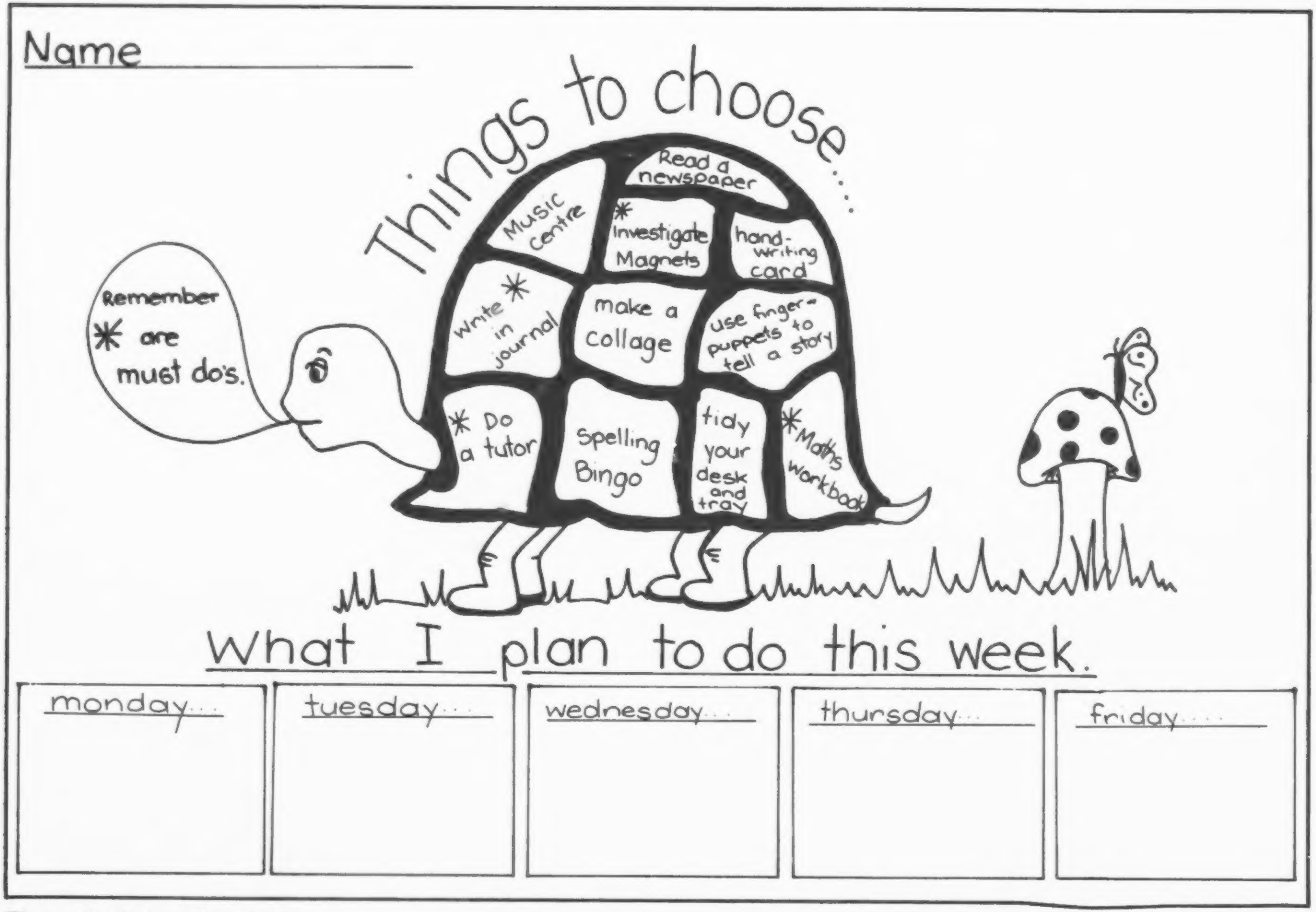

Name
Things to choose....
Read a newspaper
Music centre
* Investigate Magnets
hand-writing card
* write in journal
make a collage
use finger-puppets to tell a story
* Do a tutor
Spelling Bingo
tidy your desk and tray
* Maths workbook
Remember * are must do's.
What I plan to do this week.
monday...
tuesday...
wednesday...
thursday...
friday...

Figure 6. Colour the Turtle

left all the time, you assign that to be done first. You have to be aware of the things children are avoiding and make sure they are done.

Final words?

Vanessa: *I think it has more to offer than a straight classroom teaching situation.* Every *teaching situation has its drawbacks, but I think this one has fewer than others. You really get to know the children and become very much closer to them in this system.*

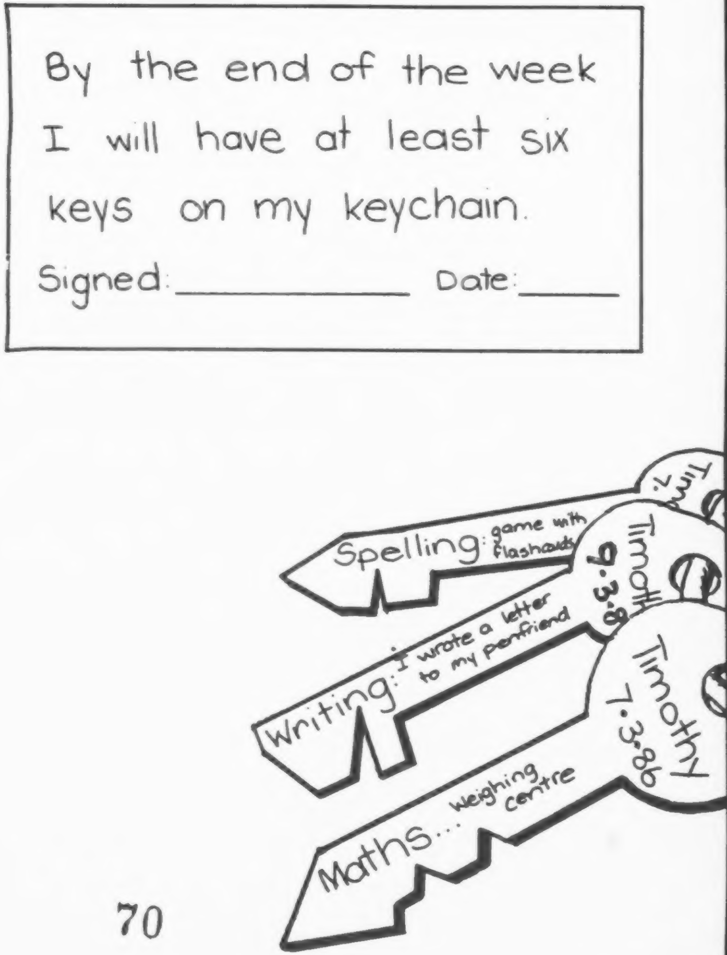
Wendy: *I think it's rewarding because you're teaching each child at his or her level. If you're in a classroom situation where they're all working at the same level, you know that there are some children who could be doing more. There are some children who are struggling, whereas in this situation you feel that you're teaching each child.*

Vanessa: *In a normal classroom situation you couldn't possibly have the children sitting for the length of time that they're prepared to sit here. They also move very well within groups—from the family group to the whole group to the peer situation. They don't think: "I don't belong here".*

They also develop quite a sense of responsibility, because the older ones look after the younger children and help them in all sorts of ways. They know they don't have to finish their work by a stated time, so they can afford to get up and go help somebody.

So there they are—the guidelines, the praise, the caution, the commitment. It is hoped that this chapter has provided enough "how to do" and "why to do" to encourage teachers to have a go with contracts. Just to leave a few more ideas to help spark readers' own ideas Figures 5, 6 and 7 illustrate more contracts designed by Cathie Matthews.

The "colour the turtle" contract (Figure 6) is an interesting variation. Each child at the beginning of the week plans the order in which s/he will do the activities and records them in the spaces at the bottom of the contract. The only activities



By the end of the week I will have at least six keys on my keychain.

Signed: ____________ Date: ______

Spelling: game with flashcards
Timothy 9.3.8
Writing: I wrote a letter to my penfriend
Timothy 7.3.86
Maths.... weighing centre
70

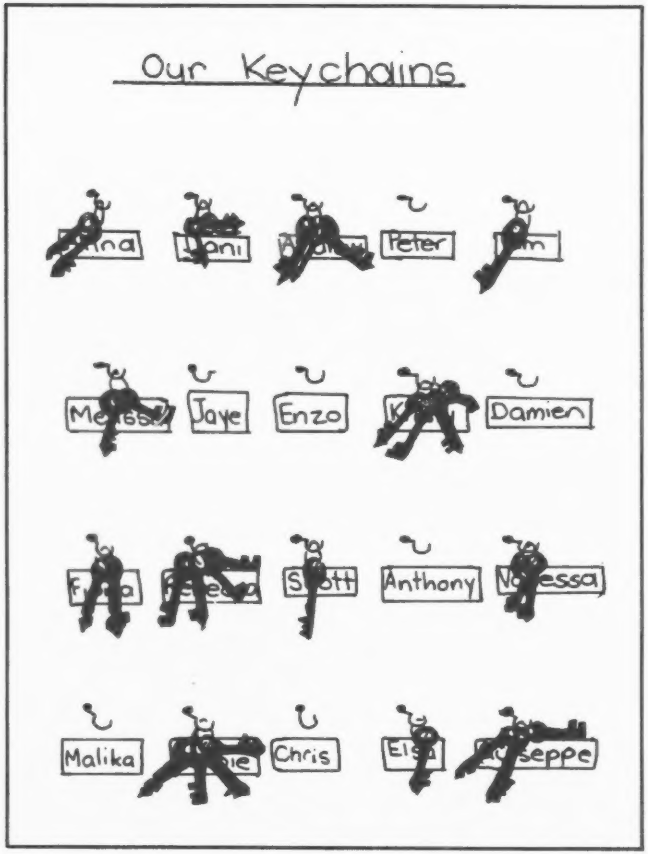


Figure 7. Keychain Contract

that have to be done are those marked with an asterisk (*). When the child has completed an activity, s/he colours in the appropriate space on the turtle's back.

Another interesting approach is the use of "keychains" (Figure 7). For this method a different coloured key is made for different working areas. After working in an area the child fills out a key and adds it to his/her chain. This enables the child to keep a record of what has been done. It also gives the child a sense of achievement and shows the teacher how the children have used their time.

Conclusion

The possibilities with contracting are endless. Here are a few reminders:

- Start *slowly.*
- Teach children how to work *independently* and how to use the relevant *materials.*
- Establish a comfortable (accepting and challenging) *climate* in the room.
- Avoid emphasising *product* to the exclusion of *process.*
- Plan for *small* and *large group* activities as well as *individual* work.
- Give children *concrete experiences* before expecting them to complete worksheet or kit material.
- Analyse each child's *interests, needs and abilities.*
- Monitor children's *physical* whereabouts.
- *Experiment* to discover a system appropriate to your children, yourself and the practicalities of class size and resources.
- *Respect and enjoy the children.*

Implicit in all that has been said here is a belief about learning which echoes Mrs Parkhurst and Professor Nunn in the 1920s but which is very applicable today. Whenever you link your teaching with a philosophy about learning, there is potential for great learner success and teacher satisfaction.

Contracts have a part to play in the development of teaching strategies which reflect what you believe about learning. Their possibilities are enormous.

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Peer Tutoring

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Peer tutoring can be an effective way to influence a child's self-concept. This article describes several classroom co-operative learning activities that allow students to work in teams to achieve a common goal. The article stresses methods of peer teaching that enhance group responsibility and awareness of goals. It emphasises that among the qualities of interaction present in peer learning are the negotiation of teaching and collaborative roles, attention-focusing, showing and pointing and informative messages.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU HEAR teachers expressing concern about how best to cater for individual differences within their class? How frequently do you hear teachers wishing for more classroom time and/or assistance in meeting such needs? Certainly there are several approaches and techniques that could help solve such problems but, as Birch (1978, p. 65) states: *"Don't overlook the valuable resource of enlisting the assistance of other children in your own class and especially students from upper grades".*

Throughout educational history, from the early Romans to the establishment of one-teacher schools, it has been a feature of everyday teaching to ask older children to assist younger ones. Today, many believe that individualisation of instruction can be enhanced through the use of **peer tutoring**.

What is peer tutoring?

Student tutoring refers to a teaching-learning process through which students serve as tutors to provide help to other students (known in the literature as "tutees"). This includes both peer and cross-age tutoring. **Peer tutoring** is when same-age students tutor their classmates. **Cross-age tutoring** is when older students help younger ones (Bohning, 1982, p. 274).

Peer and cross-age tutoring recognise that students in a classroom are a significant helping resource. The technique is not a replacement for teacher instruction but a strategy to be used as a teaching aid. A review of literature shows that tutoring programs have spanned Kindergarten to High School and have been used with handicapped as well as regular classroom learners. Both the academic and social implications of this teaching strategy will be examined in this chapter.

Research findings

Recent research has investigated the effectiveness of peer tutoring. While studies are difficult to compare, due to the diversity of approaches, most findings indicate that peer tutoring enhances students' academic performance and social development through the very process of interaction.

The main difficulty in evaluating the research arises because of the complexity of the interaction which takes place in a peer tutoring situation. Steiner (1977, p. 268) states that much of the research fails to separate peer tutoring itself from "other factors (which) may play an equally important role in determining an outcome: the programmed materials themselves, the schedule and the nature of the reinforcement and so on".

So far, recent research has considered various subject areas, modes of peer communication, group structure, reward systems, materials, and schedules of instruction. Whilst not isolating the strategy from all other factors, the research does take the complex nature of peer interaction into account before drawing conclusions.

Wilkinson (1984, p. 164), in a study of **peer group talk** in elementary school, found that by encouraging children to *talk* in small groups about their given task, students' learning, both academically and socially, will be promoted. Wilkinson's findings are based on students' performance in maths and reading in both heterogeneous and homogeneous groups.

Peer tutoring can also be effective *without* involving oral interaction between students. Crowhurst (1979) studied the benefit of **written responses** to their peers' creative writing. The students involved engaged in small-group writing workshops in which they wrote individually. Then they received written suggestions for improving their pieces, from all members of their group. Teachers of the classes found that their students enjoyed writing for, and responding to, their peers, and were motivated to produce a high standard of work. In addition, many students wrote longer pieces.

One of the most thoroughly researched forms of peer tutoring has been made in the field of **co-operative learning** methods. Several researchers have developed these methods and investigated their effectiveness in the classroom. Such methods involve assigning class members to learning groups of four to

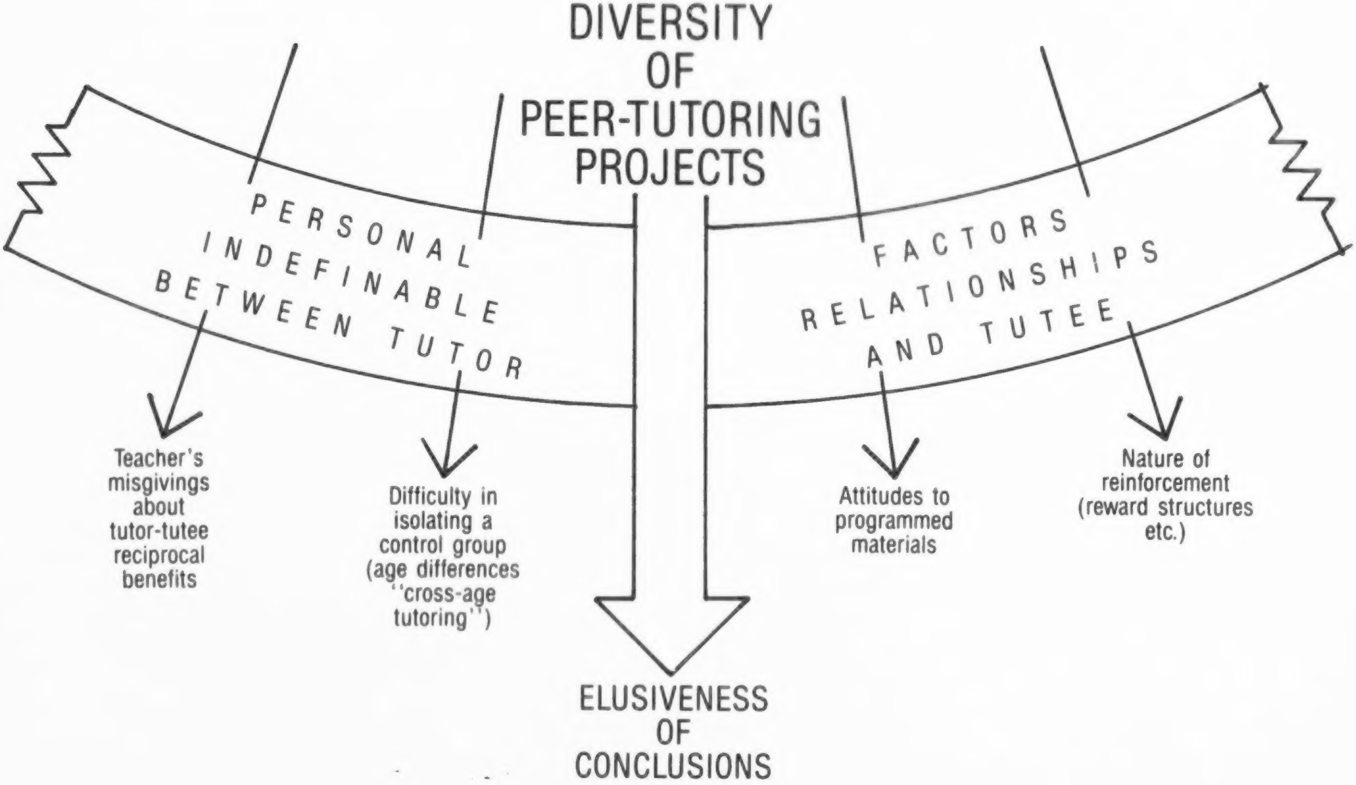

DIVERSITY OF PEER-TUTORING PROJECTS
PERSONAL
INDEFINABLE
BETWEEN TUTOR
FACTORS
RELATIONSHIPS
AND TUTEE
Teacher's misgivings about tutor-tutee reciprocal benefits
Difficulty in isolating a control group (age differences ''cross-age tutoring'')
Attitudes to programmed materials
Nature of reinforcement (reward structures etc.)
ELUSIVENESS OF CONCLUSIONS

Figure 1. Factors which complicate the research on peer tutoring

six students, ensuring that each group is representative of the ability of the range of the class.

According to Slavin (1981), most of these methods involve:

- co-operation among students,
- individual effort,
- contribution by all group members (regardless of ability level),
- motivation to co-operate through a reward structure of some sort.

In a paper which looks at the benefits of co-operative learning methods, Slavin (1981, p. 656) reports that of twenty-seven studies of co-operative learning, "a significant positive effect on student achievement was found in nineteen of these studies, no differences in seven, and in one study there was a significant difference favouring the control group".

Slavin's conclusion is that **co-operative learning methods enhance student achievement. He also states that these methods improve students' inter-personal relationships.**

While these findings argue in favour of students working together, some researchers have questioned whether the increased academic performance is due to the actual peer interaction, or perhaps to some other factor. In another study, Slavin (1980) attempted to isolate the actual factors influencing academic performance when using co-operative learning methods. He found that the task structure has no effect on academic achievement. However, the **team reward structure** and the focused schedule of instruction inherent in these methods were responsible for an increase in academic performance.

The importance of the team reward structure is supported by a study carried out by Kelly and Small (1984) which investigated the effectiveness of peer tutoring in writing groups. Experimental groups' writing performance was pre- and post-tested, as was that of a control group. The experimental group was awarded team points for achievement. This study found that, even though the control group included several students who chose to work in groups (without team reward), the experimental group performed better.

A study by Greenwood *et al.* (1984, p. 521) investigated the importance of several variables in peer tutoring. Results indicated that the "class-wide peer tutoring, compared to the teacher's procedure, produced more student academic responding and higher weekly test scores, regardless of treatment order or subject matter content".

An important aspect of peer tutoring is its **mutual benefit**. Many studies suggest that experience of peer tutoring can be of benefit to the tutor as well as to the learner, e.g. Bauman (1984, p. 605); Bowermaster (1978, p. 60); and Heward *et al.* (1982, p. 121). In Heward's study, tutors taught one another the words they would then teach to class mates. He found that "tutors, as well as tutees, receive significant academic benefit from the peer tutoring experience".

The research clearly supports the use of peer tutoring as an effective classroom management strategy, even though many questions regarding the exact nature of its effectiveness remain to be answered by further investigation.

Peer tutoring—getting started

Once the decision to implement a peer tutoring program has been made, there are several important factors to consider:

1. the nature of the task;
2. selection of tutors and learners;
3. matching tutors and learners;
4. training the tutor.

The task

With reference to the actual task or material to be taught, Morrisey (1975) suggests five criteria in deciding whether an activity is suitable for peer tutoring.

1. Is the skill essential?
2. Does the task lend itself to drill and practice?

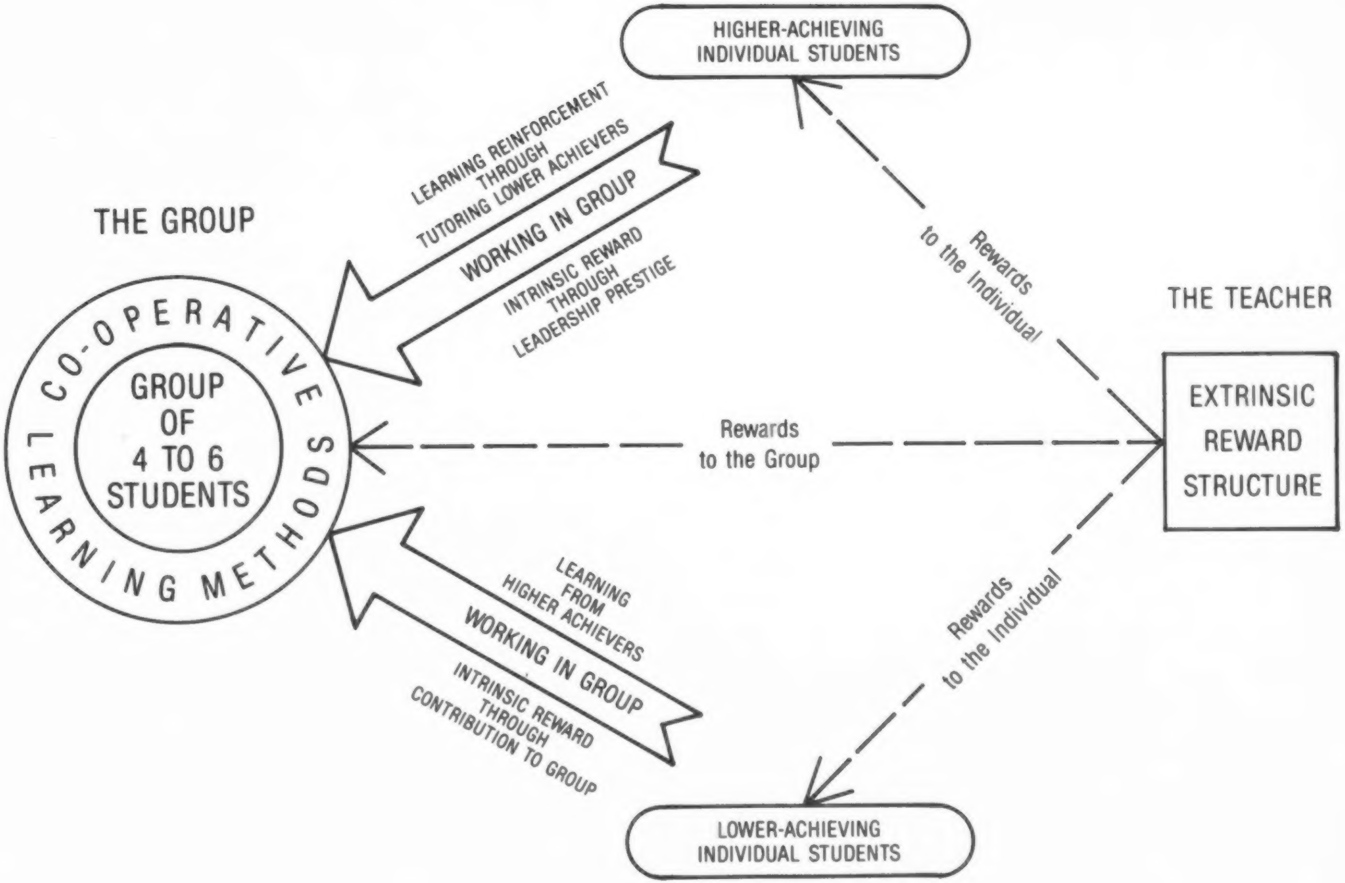

HIGHER-ACHIEVING INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS
LEARNING REINFORCEMENT THROUGH TUTORING LOWER ACHIEVERS
WORKING IN GROUP
INTRINSIC REWARD THROUGH LEADERSHIP PRESTIGE
THE GROUP
CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING METHODS
GROUP OF 4 TO 6 STUDENTS
Rewards to the Individual
THE TEACHER
EXTRINSIC REWARD STRUCTURE
Rewards to the Group
LEARNING FROM HIGHER ACHIEVERS
WORKING IN GROUP
INTRINSIC REWARD THROUGH CONTRIBUTION TO GROUP
Rewards to the Individual
LOWER-ACHIEVING INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS

Figure 2. The academic and social benefits of peer tutoring as a group process

3. Does it involve a minimal shift in task difficulty?
4. Does it involve direct participation of tutors and learners?
5. Does the task allow clear decisions as to response accuracy?

While Lehr (1984, p. 637) notes that appropriate activities may include drilling with flashcards, word lists, games, textbook work, spelling and discussion, further reading reveals a very wide range of different activities. The use of peer groups to help editing and "conferencing" of written expression is one area which has received attention recently. Perhaps the nature of the task is limited only by the teacher's imagination.

Selecting tutors and learners

In selecting tutors there are three basic considerations. Firstly, the potential tutor must be able to follow directions in an unsupervised setting. This is essential for a productive and efficient learning session. The tutor also must relate well to other students. It is important not to choose children who may be tactless or are not well liked. The third consideration is that the tutor should have mastered the material to be covered. Once again, this is essential to meet the objectives of the exercise.

Potential tutors need not be the most able or intelligent in the class. They may in fact be able to satisfy the requirements outlined above but have problems in certain areas, e.g. poor self esteem, shyness or under-achievement. You may advantage such a student by giving him or her the responsibility of being a tutor.

The prime factor in choosing the student to be tutored is **a willingness to be helped.** An unco-operative learner will reap little or no benefit from peer tutoring. A co-operative and willing attitude is essential, and the learner too should be able to work with minimal supervision.

Matching tutors and learners

Initially the teacher may be well advised to select and match those students who will react most favourably to a peer teaching situation. It is suggested that the teacher wait until the strategy has had some success before introducing children who have significant problems.

In matching tutors and tutees it is most important to select students who will work well together. This is best decided through teacher observation and knowledge of the children concerned. Close friends may or may not be able to work productively together—it depends upon the individuals. Depending upon the aim of the exercise, a quiet, withdrawn tutor may be matched with a more out-going tutee to mutual advantage. A well behaved older child may serve as a good model for a younger child whose behaviour leaves something to be desired. An older child with some learning problems may be the ideal tutor to help a younger child, and may benefit through feeling successful and confident at this task.

Provided the tutor and tutee(s) can work well together, the teacher may manipulate other factors depending upon his or her perceptions and specialised knowledge of the children in the class.

Tutor training

Organisation and planning are once again crucial to the area of tutor training. Candler (1981, p. 380) notes: "Through such organisation, teachers structure situations which allow all participants to experience success". Forward planning will minimise problems that may arise during the tutoring session.

Once selection has been made it is important to prepare tutors and explain to them their role. Tutors must also know the procedures that they are to follow.

While tutors will have some idea of their role, the following points need to be understood by the tutor:

1. *The importance of aiding rather than doing the tutee's work.*
2. *The tutor is not responsible for discipline—any problems are to be referred to the teacher.*

Once the role of the tutor has been defined, the structure of the tutoring session needs to be clarified. The following structural elements are advisable, but it must be kept in mind at all times that each element will vary according to class and grade level:

1. Knowing the assignment for the session, and what (if any) stationery, equipment or supplies are needed. The tutor will need to gather these items before the session starts.
2. Tutors need to be aware of suitable responses to their tutees, the types of activities and the correct place to conduct them.
3. After the tutoring session, the tutor is responsible for returning equipment. This is also the time when tutors relay to the teacher information about the progress made during the tutoring session. Whatever the form of the tutor's report (e.g., oral, written) it is necessary to provide some basic guidelines as to the type of information required by the teacher.

Tutoring—theory into practice

Case study 1: Presentation of a science lesson

Individual differences have always been the delight and bane of teachers. Partly in an effort to meet the demands of those differences and provide learning experiences which are stimulating, meaningful and educationally sound (as opposed to dull and repetitious) the following program of peer tutoring was embarked upon.

Task

Tutors, with helpers, were to select an animal, bird, reptile or fish which they would research and present as a lesson to a group of children from each class from Kindergarten to Year 5.

Selection of tutors

Fifteen of the more able members of a Year 6 class were chosen to act as tutors. (These were "more able" only in that they were able to miss some class work without falling behind their peers, who didn't miss any class work.) The children chosen had to demonstrate a degree of self-confidence, since they were to be a model for their peers who, during the exercise, would learn from them how to be a tutor.

The whole exercise was designed to provide the tutors with a chance to be teachers, assume responsibility and improve their academic skills; the trainee tutors (helpers) with the valuable experience of being involved in the process from the grass roots up; the tutees with individual attention and enrichment that they might not otherwise receive.

The teachers were provided with an opportunity to spend more time with those who needed more attention. A valuable experience was thus afforded to all involved.

Matching tutors and trainee tutors

After the initial selection of tutors had been performed, each of the tutors was asked to select one or two "helpers". These helpers were themselves to become tutors at a later date. They were not only to *assist* the tutor in the presentation of the lesson but also to *learn* from the tutor **how to prepare and present** a lesson.

The tutors were encouraged to choose people with whom they felt they could work well. Certainly the playground demonstrates clearly that children playing together in friendship groupings learn their games, songs, jokes, riddles and rhymes quickly. For this reason the tutors were allowed to choose their friends to work with.

Only one restriction was imposed on the choice of helpers by the teachers. The children chosen to be helpers had to be able, like the tutor, to miss some regular class time without detriment to their own progress.

Training of the tutor

The training of the tutor was very important. Indeed the whole success of the program depended upon the successful training of the tutor. Harmonious and effective peer interaction does not magically follow the command to "interact". The tutors needed to be trained carefully and provided with a structure within which to organise the learning experience they were to share.

Prior to a visit to the museum, the tutors had to select the animal they wanted to research. Having chosen their topic, the tutors, with the assistance of the helpers, had to gather all the information they could. Once the information was gathered, the tutors, together with the class teacher, visited the museum. Here the teacher and the museum's educational officer helped the tutors to organise their information into categories, demonstrating the importance of *clear, precise and well-organised information* to a successful lesson delivery.

The tutors were shown how to, in their own words, "Make it interesting". Instead of thinking simply from their own position as the lesson-giver, the tutors were encouraged to view the lesson from the perspective of the learners. The museum staff assisted the tutors in their task of presentation by lending them models of the animals they had chosen and showing the tutors how to make an environmental backdrop for the natural habitat of these animals.

Once the *content* had been organised and the *presentation* visually enhanced, the tutors had to learn some of the *skills of teaching* and the *art of successful communication.* They were shown how to ask questions and confirm correct responses, give clear directions and how to elicit questions from an audience.

Simple *group management skills* were also taught to the tutors who, in turn, passed them on to their helpers, e.g. how to correct learners in a non-punitive way and how to praise them for appropriate behaviour. These skills, as with the whole training process, were essential to the success of the program.

This was merely the beginning. The tutors, in preparing their lessons, taught their helpers what *they* had learned. Together they discussed and practised the lesson they were to give. Some tutors and their helpers trialled their presentations with other groups. The desire to do as good a job as one could was very evident.

Implementation

Tutors, with their helpers, were assigned five to six children from Year 5 and the residue of Year 6, to whom they delivered their fifteen-minute presentation. This process was repeated for every grade. By the end of the program the tutors and helpers had delivered their lessons to six different groups of children from Kindergarten to Year 5.

Each lesson varied in style and structure of presentation, since the tutors, together with their helpers, were encouraged to present their lessons in the way they thought best.

Program monitoring, supervision and evaluation

Since one of the motivations for using peer tutoring was to break out of the cycle of repetitious, teacher-based classroom activities, it was most important that peer tutoring fulfil that for which it was intended. Hence some sort of **evaluation** of the peer tutoring program was needed.

A measure of the effectiveness was the "on task" application of those involved. Throughout the program both tutors and helpers maintained high levels of interest, motivation and application, producing finished products of polished standard.

Although tutors and helpers were not marked by the teacher on the presentation of their lessons, their whole progress was closely monitored. The classroom teacher was an essential resource for the tutors and their chosen helpers. Peer tutoring was never seen as a replacement for teacher instruction but a strategy to be added to it. Hence non-prescriptive direction was always available to the tutor throughout the program.

The tutors themselves were asked to respond to how they saw the tutees in each group to whom they spoke. The report they wrote was to include comments on behaviour and responsiveness to the lesson that had been presented. The tutors felt that the learners' enthusiasm for the program was clearly demonstrated in the questions they asked before, during and after the lesson presentation.

Case study 2: Paired reading

This sequence of lessons involved an unstreamed Year 5 class. However, these lessons could also be applied across grades (for example, to achieve greater social interaction within a primary school, as well as improve reading skills).

Tutors and learners were carefully selected according to:

(i) reading levels, and
(ii) common interests.

The lessons involved oral reading and discussion. There was a daily fifteen-minute lesson for five weeks.

A week before the sequence of lessons began the tutors met with the teacher and were taught their role. Passages were read and then questioning skills were introduced. The tutors were also given a Tutor's Card (Figure 3) which was to act as a guide when they were involved in peer tutoring.

Each tutor also practised filling in a Lesson Report Card (Figure 4), which was to be completed and returned to the teacher at the completion of each lesson.

The tutors were also coached in correcting errors with sensitivity. All these skills were practised through role-play. After several practice sessions the peer teaching began.

The teacher arranged for a wide range of appropriate reading material to be available at the tutee's level. The tutee selected a book for reading. The tutor and tutee then talked about what attracted the tutee to that book, what he or she anticipated the book was about and whether it reminded him or her of another book. The tutor encouraged the tutee to want to read the book.

The tutor read the first paragraph and then allowed the tutee to read until the tutee signalled that the tutor should take over for another paragraph (the signal generally agreed on was by tapping on the table).

An important aspect of the tutor's technique was to encourage and praise. When an error was made the tutor did not interrupt but, at the conclusion of the paragraph, referred back to the group of words where the error had occurred. It was important for the tutor not to "prompt" when an error occurred. The tutor didn't give the correct word until the learner had had the opportunity to self-correct, or until some contextual clues had failed to elicit the correct word. The tutor made a note on the record card of any words which caused difficulty and could not be decoded.

After about ten minutes of reading, the tutor asked questions which involved locating details and inferring future developments from the story.

The Lesson Report Card was then returned to the teacher.

The teacher's *on-going support* and *monitoring* are essential. The peer-tutoring lesson permits the teacher to move freely between pairs, to teach a specific skill to a pair or group of pairs, or to join a pair to enjoy the reading process. Occasional taping of lessons also permits the teacher to monitor the *use of techniques* and the *degree of involvement* of both tutor and tutee.

It is also important to *acknowledge* the valuable efforts of the tutors, while *praising* the attitude of tutees.

In this case study, peer tutoring was found to enhance greatly the children's sense of achievement. It is valuable, if only as a change from the usual teacher-directed format of daily classroom activities.

TUTOR'S CARD

My name:

My student's name:

I will:

- Be friendly.
- Be interested.
- Encourage ______________ to want to read the book.
- Read with expression and fluency, varying my volume and tone.
- Never interrupt or prompt or tell ___________ a word or answer until I have given ___________ the chance to work it out.
- Be patient.
- Praise improved expression and accuracy.
- Question ___________ about what has been read and what can be expected to happen.
- Complete the *Record Card* each lesson.
- Enthuse ___________ to read on independently before our next session together.

Signed: ______________________

Figure 3. Tutor's Card

Case study 3: "Conference writing"

The "process" approach to creative writing has resulted in "conferencing" becoming an integral part of classroom teaching strategy. It provides an ideal opportunity to implement peer tutoring techniques on a regular basis in the classroom.

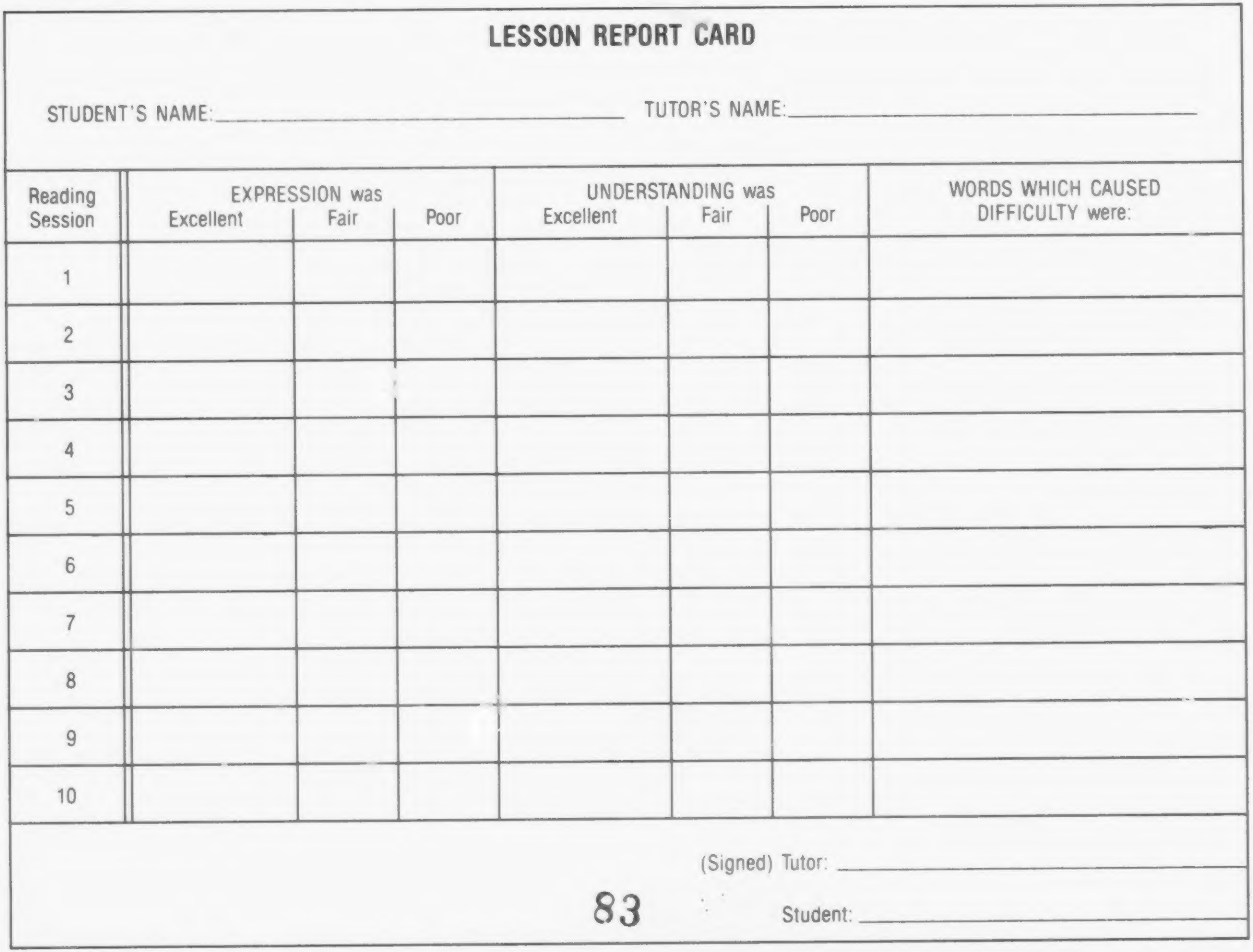
A Year 6 teacher recognised the opportunity to involve the students in a situation which allowed them to learn while teaching. The teacher recognised that conferencing is the process of sharing writing.

Sharing occurred *during* the writing process by

- offering support and encouragement through discussion;
- commenting on sections of the writing which were unclear;
- reviewing details and conclusions within the writing;
- clarifying the writing skills that could best be applied.

Further peer involvement occurred in the sharing of the writing *after* the writing process, when peers shared with the author the editing, publishing and debating of issues raised by the writing.

ake me
"Well, be off with you!"
said th' Troll



LESSON REPORT CARD

STUDENT'S NAME:____________________ TUTOR'S NAME:____________________

Reading Session	EXPRESSION was			UNDERSTANDING was			WORDS WHICH CAUSED DIFFICULTY were:
	Excellent	Fair	Poor	Excellent	Fair	Poor	
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							

(Signed) Tutor: ____________________

Student: ____________________

Figure 4. Lesson Report Card

The discussions between the writer and fellow students involved the consideration of a variety of writing skills, including:

- the experience or *ideas* which led to the writing;
- the *sequencing* of those ideas;
- the *choice of title*;
- the *relevance* of the ideas (were any sections unnecessary?);
- the *detail* (was any part lacking in information?);
- the *beginning*;
- the *ending*;
- the appropriateness of the *language* used;
- the *style* of writing selected (e.g. humour, first person narrative, colloquial speech, alliteration, exaggeration);
- the *form* of the writing (e.g. were certain sentence beginnings and conjunctions repeated too frequently?; spelling; punctuation; etc).

It took some application over a term to encourage free discussion among the students. They tended initially to be excessively critical and to concentrate on the more fundamental and obvious, e.g. spelling and punctuation errors. It was necessary to seek those comments which were *approving* of some feature of the writing. The only stipulation was that the comments shared had to be positive. "I just didn't like that story" was not acceptable literary criticism.

As the students became more confident, they also became more competent. Not only were they more analytical of the writing of others, but also of their own. The teacher's role was one of facilitator, record-keeper and audience, though the opinions of other members of the audience—the writer's peers—may have been at least as important.

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Parents, Teachers, Children and the Literacy Curriculum

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"Parental Involvement" is a term which means many different things to different people. It can mean parents performing menial tasks in order to help classrooms run more efficiently, but it can also mean teachers and parents supporting each other in the educational process. This chaper begins with a review of literature from Australia and Britain pertaining to the involvement of parents as home tutors of literature. The author suggests that recent naturalistic studies of literacy learning challenge the traditional view that literacy teaching is the responsibility of the school alone. He then provides a detailed case study of an innovative program devised and implemented in the Australian Capital Territory. This program has been successful in assisting parents to effectively support their children's literacy development at home.

Introduction

'Parent involvement' has become a familiar catch phrase of educators over the last couple of decades. Most readers of this chapter will be well aware of the traditional role of the parent as classroom helper. A succession of key reports on education in both England and Australia has touched upon the desirability or otherwise of involving parents in the formal education of their own children. While most of these reports reinforced the notion of parent as helper, the Plowden Report (1967) did question whether the traditional, menial parent role was sufficient. It suggested that parents could contribute more actively and positively. It also questioned whether the formal education of a child could be complete without a bond of mutual understanding and trust between parents and teachers, wherein each must support the other in the child's school learning activities and relationships with his or her teachers.

Some schools at primary and secondary levels have always followed a policy of involving parents in various extra-curricular teaching programs. On the other hand parents are, in other schools, almost unwelcome except at the school's formal request. In some places also, parents appear to be eager for participation; in others they are seen to be apathetic about, even aggresssive towards, teachers as people or the school as an institution.

Some teachers believe that these extremes of attitude are in some ways linked with the socio-economic background and educational status of the community. They perceive the more affluent groups to have educational consciousness and the less affluent to be indifferent. In reality, however, it is often the case that in the less affluent areas parents are at their keenest for the children's school participation and success. They are therefore most receptive of teachers' attempts to involve parents in the daily life of the school.

Parents as home literacy tutors

In two important literacy education projects in England, conducted during the late 'seventies and early 'eighties, parents were encouraged to take on active, positive roles in supporting their children's reading development. These projects, the consecutive Dagenham and Haringey projects (Tizard, Schofield and Hewison, 1982) and the Belfield Community Project at Rochdale (Jackson and Hannon, 1981) have been reported extensively elsewhere. Both are milestones in the development of parents as formal, school-supported tutors in literacy. They are especially significant as the results of each show literacy gains through parent involvement in home assistance, despite difficult socio-educational circumstances. The communities involved were multi-racial, multi-lingual and representative of unfortunately high proportions of poverty and unemployment amongst parents and young adults. So dramatic were the effects of these projects that in one of them parents proved to be even more effective with their slower learning children than a specially trained and experienced remedial teacher working with a control group of slower developing children. There were also several cases where non-literate parents not only became effective listeners to their children's reading but acquired reading skill themselves.

The Australian scene

Within Australian settings there are many schools which are attempting to develop parent-integration programs similar to those in England. Others have similar purposes but take different approaches. Indeed, there is a longer and more striking history of parent integration programs in Australia than most teachers are aware of. Interested readers will find in this chapter's bibliography reference to recent favourable reports on Australian school-based experimental or extra-curricular programs which were designed to advise parents about, or encourage them to participate in, literacy curricular developments. Practical descriptions of programs successfully mounted in particular schools have also been reported, and these too are included in the bibliography.

Literacy learning as a developmental learning

Our professional and almost absolute control of literacy learning and teaching has begun, then, to face quite a challenge. The challenge comes from the accumulating evidence that literacy learning is being made to look much more like a developmental learning than it used to. The controlling, locked-in condition of teaching reading and writing when children are six has been, and still might be, favourable for the majority; but for a considerable number of children it is not. Support for a developmental learning model of literacy comes from a number of recently reported naturalistic studies, listed for interested readers in the bibliography. For instance, some three-year-olds are already beyond experimenting with symbols, and are already approximating to skill through self-initiated and self-monitoring attempts to find meaning and give meaning. They are able to reflect, hypothesise and talk about what they are learning through letters, words, and stories in ways that are characteristic of other developmental learnings. Kindergarten teachers report now on the massive writing experiences which have turned five-year-olds into authors as a consequence of the process writing movement (Graves, 1981) when, a few years ago, such developments were unheard of. In each of these illustrations the home influence is likely to be, or has been, of very powerful proportions. Each is able to rest its case, if that is needed, for teachers and parents to be drawn much closer together than they are in the planning and development of literacy curricula in at least the early levels of schooling.

A parents-as-tutors program

The program described in this chapter came about at a time when concerned primary, secondary and tertiary teachers and Schools Authority administrators in the A.C.T. were considering the functions of remedial teachers within the region. Issues which were explored by this group included those of preventative, surveillance and corrective measures in literacy program evaluation. An A.C.T. Schools Authority policy change had seen a shift from the traditional remedial teaching program in primary schools to a gradual implementation of a resource (or classroom-integrated) teaching procedure for assisting children with literacy difficulties. This decision sparked off a move within the Canberra College of Advanced Education (C.C.A.E.) to prepare the resource teachers in training for developing stronger cohesion in literacy curricula between each neighbourhood school and its parents. As a consequence, a program was developed in the Schools and Community Centre at C.C.A.E. to bring children with special needs and their counsellors, parents, teachers and resource teacher into a stronger "systems" arrangement (Holmes, 1980) which would focus upon training parents as tutors to their own under achieving children.

The aims of the C.C.A.E. Schools and Community Centre program were:

i) to provide parents with a regular, structured program of either individual or group sessions which would enable them to build their own observation, recording and tutorial skills in aspects of literacy, and thereby support their children's literacy development at home; and

ii) to give graduate teachers a set of parent-training experiences which would better fit them to plan and undertake parents-as-tutors programs with parents in their own schools.

Three programs were designed to help meet these aims, and each is described below.

i) *Group training program with parents.*
This program includes ten two-hour workshop sessions, using teaching materials and videotapes of techniques such as listening to reading, using correction strategies during reading aloud, assisting in process writing, helping with spelling, group interactions for mutual support, and parent-

teacher communication strategies. The structure and content of the seminar sessions are given below. These sessions have become focal to all parents and it is mandatory for parent participants to attend them prior to the provision of other services.

ii) *A day-time consultation between Centre staff and individual parents.*
These sessions include both parents if possible. They cater for parents who need individualised support. They are conducted for approximately one hour each week and are managed by full-time tutors. They commence with the child attending but generally taper off the child's attendance as the parents' confidence and skill develops. Periodic "recall" of the child is arranged to monitor progress. Parents' skills are reviewed through micro-teaching sessions, using videotapes filmed through a one-way screen. Each session includes a planning and review time for assisting the parents in programming their home sessions, which are scheduled to last for fifteen minutes only each week night.

iii) *A day-time or early evening program of one hour each week for the children of parents who have completed the series of training seminars*, but where the parents are still dependent upon personal assistance or feel that their child responds better to them at C.C.A.E. than at home. These programs are supervised by post-graduate students, each one taking responsibility for a family.

The structure of the main elements of the program, which are translatable into school circumstances, is as shown in Table A. All participating parents and children are referred through local counselling services as shown in the Table. Replication of a structure such as this one in a local school would perhaps look like the one given in Table B.

Table A
Diagram of C.C.A.E. Parents-as-Tutors Program Structure

	Phase 3 Tutor-family follow-up program (as long as needed)	Tutor's input
Visits to and from child's teacher(s)	**Phase 2** One-teacher/one family support program (two semesters)	Resource teacher's input (with counsellor support if needed)
Referral from school counselling services	**Phase 1** Parents' seminars (one semester)	Tutor's input

Theoretical bases of the program

The principles of curricula and teaching which are advocated throughout each program are those which come under the rubric of "psycholinguistic", wherein the focus of language teaching in all of its dimensions is upon meaning, not simply on structure or linguistic patterning or "correctness".

Central to a psycholinguistic theory of learning to read, write and spell is the belief that the form of any oral or written communication is determined by its function: to "mean" involves an expression or a message being formulated according to the context of the expression, whether it is for oneself, to another person or to a larger number; whether it is for information, for enjoyment, reflection or simply to sustain company; or think aloud or briefly to express or exchange an idea.

Psycholinguistic theory would hold that the purpose of the communication, the transmission of meaning, is the nub of learning *how* to communicate—to receive by listening and reading and to generate by speaking and writing. In essence, the theory says very simply that one learns to talk by talking,

Table B
Projected Model for Parents-as-Tutors Program in Schools

	Phase 3 Resource Teacher/family follow-up program (as long as needed)	Resource teacher's input
Parent's visits to classroom	**Phase 2** Resource teacher and class teacher/family support program (two terms)	Class teacher's input
Referral of child from class teacher or counsellor	**Phase 1** Parents' seminars (one term)	Resource teacher's/counsellor's input

read by reading, and to write and spell by writing. Within the process of children doing these things, teachers or parents may find a structure for helping them to perfect the processes. When the structure is imposed upon learners from outside so that reading, writing and spelling are learned as code manipulations, and hence communication must await the children's learning of the code systems, some children will cope but others will not. Most of the children involved in the program have not coped with teaching which has emphasised code systems, although there are also some who have responded to neither of these curriculum approaches.

Psycholinguistic theory appears to have a growing body of adherents amongst teachers. Within school communities including of course parents, it attracts a wide audience for explaining how reading, writing and spelling problems are caused, sustained, then analysed and described, and finally resolved. It also proposes a sufficient number of "freedoms" within its appropriate assessment and teaching contexts to give parents several alternatives in approach when helping their children at home. These assessment and teaching procedures, however, need to be explained and demonstrated to parents.

Structure and content of the parents-as-tutors seminars

When parents are referred by professional services personnel to the program they are usually told that the C.C.A.E. program is one of a number of options. Interestingly there is a high acceptance rate and this indicates both the strong drive many parents have to gain information about literacy learning and teaching practices, and the commitment which they have to assisting their own children. These opinions are borne out in subsequent interviews with parents, when information is sought from them about, amongst other things, their child's school history (Kemp, 1985, [a] and [b]).

Parents then attend the seminar program for ten sessions spread over fifteen weeks, each session lasting between 1½ and 2 hours.

The contents of the sessions, backed-up by a specially prepared manual and audio and visual tapes, is as follows:

Preliminary Session—Videotape of parent(s) and child working together.

Seminar Session 1
- Introduction.
- The purposes of the program; its history and present functions.
- What participants in the past have told us about themselves, their children and their children's schooling.
- Timetabling for 15 minutes each day.
- The "learning climate" (1).

Seminar Session 2
- Listening to your child reading—our baseline measurements of home teaching.

- Listening to your child reading—the pause-before-prompting principle; how to focus upon meaning; showing your child some reading strategies.
- Why play the waiting game? Illustrations of errors in oral reading and the consequences of telling too much, too soon.

Seminar Session 3

- What is it like to learn to read? Learning a new orthography and alphabet.
  Memory overload—bottlenecks of letters and the mish-mash of spelling, "sounding-out", reading-for-noise-making and reading for performance.
- Transformations.
- Read-along, NIM (Neurological Impress Method) and Reading Together.

Seminar Session 4

- Planning your home help program.
  Developing a pattern and routine.
  The "learning climate" (2).
  Further practice with transformations and NIM.
- Reading together—how to judge and use text effectively.
  Oral cloze procedures.

P-T-P break during which the home program should commence. Participants are asked to keep records as discussed in seminars.

Seminar Session 5

- Review of the home sessions conducted during the preceding fortnight.
- Making a running record of oral reading: a review of helping with cues and strategies.
- Questioning for meaning.
  "Dad, I've got to do a project on Queen Victoria".

Seminar Session 6

- Looking at children's writing—the first attempts.
  Looking at children giving up writing—the last attempts.
  Finding a way to re-start the writing process: the dictated story.
  Building the dictated story into a book.
  "Mum, my book's in the library."
- Where do we go from here in writing?

Seminar Session 7

- Looking at books for children—the springboards of talking, listening, reading and writing.

Seminar Session 8

- The writing process—Donald Graves's plan to make every child an author.
  "Why isn't this spelling corrected?"
  "Don't they teach grammar these days?"
  "Look at this awful mess: it's a wonder he can read his own writing."
  "Ah yes, but listen to the story."

Seminar Session 9

- Spelling crises—"He knew them all last night but he got them all wrong this morning."
  "What's a quota?"
  Being a perfect speller, or knowing how to correct *all* of your own errors.
- Review of home help progress.

Seminar Session 10

- Where will it all end? Some case histories of parents as tutors.
- Review of the program, and planning for the next sequences of helping at home.
- Arrangements for post-program interviews and assessments of children.
- Arrangements for follow-up assistance.

Post-Program Session

- Videotape of parent[s] and child working together.

Outcomes of the program

There are three basic streams of evaluation of the program as a whole, the children's progress being the first, the parents' learning and actual control of teaching at home being the second, and the supervising teachers' effectiveness as support agencies being the third. Perhaps one should simply say that, if the children learn to read, write and spell more quickly and with longer-lasting effects than would otherwise have been possible, then the program would have fulfilled its intentions. Desirable though such outcomes would obviously be, partial fulfilment or non-fulfilment immediately would not necessarily connote failure of the program as a whole or in the long term. Nor would it necessarily be totally successful if all the children did become literate but, despite this, be uninterested in practising their skills; or, in the case of parents, if they lost interest in their children's further progress and literacy achievements; or in the case of teachers, if they wished to have no further involvement with parents in pursuing effective support programs with their children.

The children

As a matter of policy, no child in the program is given a standardised achievement test. Reading ages or performance levels as shown by scaled scores are not sought for two reasons: (i) such measurements say nothing about the process of reading, writing or spelling and, when made, may in any case be misleading about the range of performance levels within which the child functions; (ii) most of the children have been given many standardised tests in the past and have not benefited from them. Under these conditions it is not possible—nor is it considered desirable—to calculate progress or success rates according to pre-program and post-program standardised assessments. Advancements in reading are assessed through progressive Running Records (Clay, 1979) or Miscue Analysis (Goodman and Burke, 1972) and by assessment of the levels of text which children can read and understand. Progress in writing is assessed according to Graves's process writing principles and a particular system of classifying samples of unaided, self-edited writing. Spelling is assessed in the same way. Assessments of children's progress through the program are best made, perhaps, on the basis of the child's functional literacy levels which are judged according to the criteria contained in observation schedules devised especially for the Centre's curriculum (Kemp, in press).

These assessments, however, have to be put into a context of the age (and therefore to some extent the confidence level) of the children entering the program, as well as of their cognitive and functional language capacities. One of the most significant assessments has been the parents' assertions that their children improve markedly because they see their parents as so overtly committed to learning about teaching and to giving them skilled help at home. This factor is, on occasions, so pronounced that one wonders whether the experimental appeal of the program is sufficient to bring about change.

The parents

Attendance and retention rates of parents in the seminar program are over 95%. Perhaps this is an index of the lengths to which parents will go to seek information and, as well, of their capacity to meet the demands made upon them by the seminars. Beyond the seminar program, the parents' commitment to their weekly C.C.A.E. visits, the micro-teaching segments and the regular work schedules at home have been noteworthy.

End-of-seminar program reviews have indicated that the parents work at home with their children on a regular, ten-to-fifteen minutes schedule, varying between three nights a week to six or seven. A few find their time management an insurmountable difficulty: single parents and some of the pairemployed have had considerable organisational problems to overcome. This may be an index of how much further support these parents need in the post-seminar period. This group of parents tends to respond on demand, relying on the initiatives of their children in getting them to help with homework. Of course, such initiatives by the children might often not be forthcoming.

Understanding the process

When they are asked to name the content of greatest value the overwhelming response has been, surprisingly perhaps, that the explanations of the reading process associated with listening, questioning and prompting during oral reading are the catalyst of most marked change in the parents' assistance to their children. It has been this area of content which has most reduced parents' anxieties, frustrations and impatience. It has been said by many parents that the notion of "a search for meaning" and illustrations from tapes and transcripts have enabled them to understand why and how errors occur, has increased their anticipations of errors through their awareness of text, has helped them to find strategies for teaching and questioning, and has enabled them to withhold distracting comments during their children's pauses and re-runs during oral reading. To some, being made aware of such matters has brought about an immediate, dramatic change in the homework climate and hence in their relationships with their children.

The teachers

As the teachers who sustain the families' programs are enrolled in a Literacy Studies course and their work with parents is part of their practicum, their incentives to make the programs work are very high and therefore one must be careful about generalising success potential from this program to other school settings. Undoubtedly the teachers' experiences in counselling, time management, programming of content, modelling teaching procedures, reviewing parents' teaching, assessing and analysing the children's literacy status and processing, liaising with schools, reporting to principals and teachers, and developing skills in observing, recording and reporting their children's development are all contributing to the teachers' growth beyond simply being teachers of literacy. The most obvious index of the teachers' perceptions of parents-as-tutors training programs is their keenness to implement similar programs in their own schools. Many have already done this during the last two years.

Conclusion

The program described has been designed to fulfil a number of literacy learning needs of children which could not normally be fulfilled by teachers without additional support. The support in this case is provided by the children's parents. Such support must be based upon the parents' understanding of learning processes in reading, writing and spelling as well as the teaching systems at home which may best augment the teachers' work at school. These particular literacy teaching efforts have focused upon the schools' corrective functions.

But, given the evidence now available from other sources, it would seem desirable that efforts should also be made by schools to commence such programs either before or simultaneously with young children's entry to school, so that the preventative and enrichment modes of parents' activities in literacy with their children may receive as much attention, at least, as the corrective.

It is our belief that in the program which has been reviewed here, most parents have fulfilled the literacy teaching functions effectively and that with some adaptations the system has application in schools.

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Team Teaching

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In this chapter team teaching is defined as the simultaneous responsibility by two or more teachers for the total educational program of a group of children. In such a co-operative venture there are benefits for children, parents and teachers. The author describes these benefits, but also stresses that co-operation between teachers requires careful planning and good rapport. A number of case studies of team teaching situations are presented, ranging from the integration of specialist staff into the classroom learning program to the sharing of a large group of children by two teachers in a double-classroom space, employing an "open-plan" approach. The chapter concludes with practical guidelines for teachers interested in trying team teaching. There are ideas for arranging the classroom space, for enlisting the co-operation of parents and children, and for making the most of the team partnership.

The idea of teaching in front of other teachers or with another teacher in view was one of many threatening, or at least annoying, aspects of the architecturally open school buildings that started to appear in Australia in the early 1970s. But teachers took advantage of change and, by combining imagination and a lot of hard work, developed ways to capitalise on the flexibility offered by open-area classrooms. Team teaching was one of the concepts that emerged. Laslett (1979, p. 25) suggests

> . . . teachers who work in open-space schools have had to change . . . The opportunity for involvement and co-operation with others is constantly beckoning. Teachers in open-space schools work within view and earshot of each other. As a result they develop a close sense of co-operation.

What perhaps began as an exchange of glances and a "sense" of co-operation has developed over the years into a highly sophisticated, finely-honed integration of plans, ideas, resources, timetables, and specialisations with two or more "teachers having simultaneous responsibility for the total educational program of a group of children" (Broadby, 1982, p. 1).

Teachers aren't the only ones affected by the shift to co-operative teaching. Children, when interviewed, commented:

> *"It helps us get used to the idea of having more than one teacher in the school."*
>
> *"It's not so boring—seeing the same face every day."*
>
> *"Our teachers seem to come up with more good ideas. We get more interesting things to do."* (Broadby, 1982, p. 10.)

Teachers noted improved social and communication skills amongst students and an increased capacity to work with others, as class discussions and a range of small-group activities were facilitated by team teaching (Slessar, 1983, p. 10). Other teachers have pointed out that team teaching extends bright pupils, motivates below average pupils, develops self-confidence, affords easy access to the use of equipment and resources, and encourages co-operation (Mathew and Maher, 1978, p. 54).

The variety and flexibility of grouping afforded by two teachers and larger double classrooms makes it easier to integrate parents and other community volunteers into different aspects of the educational program. Additionally, parents can see direct benefits for their children.

> *"More stimulating, challenging for children."*
>
> *"I think it's good to have two teachers—a child can get to rely on one too much."*
>
> *"Could reduce the possibility of personality conflict between a teacher and a child."*
>
> *"Eases them into secondary education."*
>
> *"Increased expertise, strengths, if two teachers."*
>
> *"When one is sick, there is still some continuity."* (Broadby, 1982, p. 13.)

The Broadby (1982, p. 10) study in Tasmania also solicited the opinion of senior staff, including the Principal. Some specific strengths mentioned were:

> *"Children receive the benefits of two sets of ideas, experiences."*
>
> *"Specialising is extended. There is the likelihood of a greater range of* fortes*."*
>
> *"Teachers extend themselves as a result of working together."*

Other advantages from the administrator's point of view have to do with in-service, induction, and timetabling. Half staff withdrawals are not as disruptive to the educational program; new teachers, by working with experienced teachers, are provided with a model and can adopt the full teaching role at an individualised pace; and large groups are easily timetabled to work with specialist teachers in P.E. and music, for example.

One Principal at a relatively new school, built with double units only, proposes that teaching is no longer a private thing. With the introduction of teacher aides, parents in the classroom, and now teaching partners, the isolation of one teacher, one

class can be avoided. Teachers can exploit each other's talents, and children are exposed to a far greater range of experiences.

Teachers who enjoyed teaming enough to write about it confirmed the predictions of theorists when describing the effects of the team approach. They felt they had learned new skills and become more flexible in their view of their discipline (Cameron, J., et al., 1984, p. 23). Another team, from New South Wales, summed it up:

> *"The team teaching situation facilitates the immediate solving of problems and an exchange of opinion: 'Two heads are better than one'."*
>
> *"The combining of interests and techniques of each teacher allows one to learn from the other and upgrade the standard."*
>
> *"Co-operation, tolerance of each other and a desire to improve teaching conditions are developed."* (Mathew and Maher, 1978, p. 54.)

Although not seemingly a necessary outcome, these teachers also felt that the teacher-pupil relationship became more free and relaxed. One teacher suggested that, because of the increase in small grouping, the children teach each other more and share in classroom discipline. This may explain the air of relaxation noted by the N.S.W. team

The strengths of team teaching are perhaps too obvious to mention. What are the disadvantages? Given that two teachers are keen to work together, that there is a supportive school staff, that there is a reasonable space to develop into a large multipurpose learning area, what is the problem? **Time.** Being one teacher responsible for one group means planning can occur anytime at the teacher's convenience. Working with another person requires scheduled meetings, and is accompanied by a geometric growth in the number of ideas and possibilities to be coped with. It is also more difficult to make spur-of-the-moment changes to the timetable. But not impossible. *"Team teaching, like marriage, requires sensitivity, flexibility, and a gift for rapport"* (Sykes, 1981, p. 18).

Integration of specialist staff into the classroom learning program

Andrews (1979) estimates that 11.01% of all children in regular schools have continuing difficulty in coping with basic school learning and require the services of specially trained personnel. As withdrawal programs are disruptive (Johnstone, 1980, p. 18), often repetitive and confusing to children (Johnstone, 1983, p. 35), and isolating (Slessar, 1983, p. 9) a "part-time" team teaching approach which integrates specialist staff into the classroom is appearing in several contexts throughout Australia.

A. Migrant and remedial English

At Oak Park High School in Victoria, four Year 7 classroom teachers, two specialist staff, one migrant educator, one remedial educator and one teacher's aide implemented a team teaching plan which ensured each specialist teacher was shared equally throughout the four English classes. The team met weekly to discuss progress and forward plans which enabled "both specialist and classroom teachers to share equally in what is to be done and to benefit mutually from individual expertise in areas of the subject" (Slessar, 1983, p. 9). This team teaching program exposed students to different teaching techniques, provided a good range of activities, and increased small-group work, thereby broadening students' sensitivity toward others.

B. The disabled

Recent articles (Cameron, 1984), (Western, 1981), (Johnstone, 1981, 1983) report on the success of integrating therapeutic programs into syllabus programs in order to create a more comprehensive education for the children.

As Cameron, et al. (1984, p. 18, 19) report:

> Instead of the children being removed from the classroom for individual speech, physiotherapy and occupational therapy sessions, the therapist comes into the classroom and works with the child in

a team setting, making the therapy an integrated part of the whole educational program. For example, if a handwriting lesson is in progress the physiotherapist may suggest the best posture, the occupational therapist work on appropriate pencil grip, the speech therapist on communication and language related to the activity and the teacher select the next written letter to be practised.

As in any team approach, multi-disciplinary teams need to meet regularly for planning and assessment of their program. The effectiveness of multi-disciplinary teamwork depends on accurate communication of information, ideas and feelings, shared leadership, decision-making by consensus, loyalty (complete compatibility is not vital) to the team, and members having some idea of the dynamics of working in a group (Johnstone, 1980, p. 19, 20). It is also recommended that new teams spend a fair bit of time learning about each other's biases and interests.

C. *Bilingual education program teams*

"Team teaching in the Northern Territory is a term that is used in Bilingual Schools to describe the way an Aboriginal teacher and a non-Aboriginal teacher work together in the classroom situation" (Graham, 1979, p. 39).

Aboriginal people who speak a language spoken by only a few hundred or at most a thousand people *do* need to learn English, but not merely to gain an education. What is important has to do with what people are "thinking" and with what they do with what they know. In other words, the mother tongue plays a critical role in the achievement of full cognitive development. Graham (1979, p. 29) reviews several studies substantiating this point and concludes also that "great emphasis must be placed on the mother tongue in early years, at least until abstract thinking has taken place, for a child to develop real competency in English when older".

McGill (1981, p. 17) suggests that, in Year 1, 80% of the teaching should be in the Aboriginal language, and that teaching should cover the full range of curriculum subjects. The Northern Territory Department of Education believes that bicultural education is an essential element for significant learning and the maintenance of self-identity and motivation. Aboriginal teachers are a most significant part of bicultural education (Graham, 1981, p. 18).

Two heads are better than one.

The challenges facing the Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal teaching teams illustrate and dramatise important aspects of all team teaching systems. The following points are drawn largely from Warren (1979), Graham (1981) and Moeckell (1982):

1. Sharing skills (e.g. by "teaching" the rest of the group something) and approaches, appreciating the value of differences.
2. Structuring team meetings to ensure co-operative and shared participation (e.g. start each meeting with each person relating an impression or experience).
3. Including the investigation of new resources/ideas (e.g. by meeting occasionally with other teams) as a feature of team meetings.
4. Regular scheduling of team meetings.
5. Planning explanations for parents; integrating them into the learning program.

D. Co-operative planning and teaching with the teacher-librarian

Planning and teaching with the school's librarian is also a form of team teaching and as such should perhaps be approached with more rigor. The ideal way to teach information-seeking skills is to integrate them with classroom work. Teachers who work with the librarian in this way can save hours of preparation time for themselves. When these two units combine skills and work together, they can gear library skills into needs arising from classroom activities (Lundin, 1984).

Full-time teaching in ordinary classrooms

A. Lockridge Primary School, W.A.

In order to offer learning environments which accommodate differences in learning styles, Lockridge Primary School has divided itself into three distinct sub-schools—a traditional one (of one-teacher/one-classroom), an integrated one which offers cross-setting between 2-3 teachers for different subjects, and a structured-open system which has family (vertical) grouping and five teachers working as a team.

Gary Deere (1980), a teacher in the structured-open sub-school, described the system in *Education (W.A.)*.

There are no physical barriers in the sub-school, making it much easier to practise and sustain co-operative behaviours between children, and teachers, and combinations of the two. Children realise that if one teacher is busy there are four others to turn to. Children are encouraged to talk and work together and to help each other. Older children tutor younger children.

Sequential subjects are ability grouped (across ages), and children with specific weaknesses are placed in smaller groups with teachers in the team best able to help them. Teachers rotate wherever possible so that the children will gain a wide variety of ideas on how to approach a task.

The non-sequential subjects occur in a flexibly scheduled afternoon program and give teachers an opportunity to utilise their strengths in the cultural areas of literature, music, oral English, drama and film appreciation; and in the written expression areas of reviews, advertisements and letter, poetry and play writing. Teacher specialisation is also carried over into social studies, science, art and craft. Team teaching is most beneficial in these areas "where one teacher introduces the task to two classes and the other teacher helps supervise" (p. 28). This gives teachers more time to plan for their lessons, time which is essential to making lessons interesting. One of the main goals of the structured-open sub-school is for children to *want* to learn, to enjoy the work they do.

The flexible afternoons plan around a theme ("food" was one recently completed) which provides some cohesiveness and brings the whole sub-school together for culminating activities (such as going to a restaurant).

The teachers utilise a contract system which keeps the teacher informed of progress in all areas, gives the children a document to use and carry around with them to guide activities, and is an indicator to parents of what their child is doing.

The team has weekly meetings at which each teacher has an equal input into discussion and decision-making. Children with special problems are discussed and ways to help them formulated.

Teachers on a team are subjected to a large amount of recording, marking, and written descriptions of what they're doing, because everyone on the team needs this information. Deere feels the system could not function without the dedication of teachers; the reward is that they have worked out a way to put the needs and interests of the children first and successfully contribute to the development of their social behaviour and academic ability.

B. Gabbinbar Primary School (Queensland)

There are, of course, many factors that give teachers the idea of team teaching. We have discussed, for example, the nonverbal invitation offered by open-area design. The teachers of Years 1, 2 and 3 at Gabbinbar Primary School were not only in a flexible space unit but, more importantly, wanted to share the same materials. It had been unsatisfactory to shift the *Breakthrough to Literacy* materials from place to place. Planning a permanent (and attractive) setting for the "Sentence Maker", the "Word Makers", "Story Holders" and Breakthrough books brought four teachers together, each with a Year 1-3 family group, to work co-operatively.

One area of their space was set aside for language studies and a co-operative timetable devised, which allowed for two groups at a time to use this space. Consequently, in any given day, up to 120 children may have used the *Breakthrough to Literacy* program (Langdale and McDonald, 1982).

C. Maclean Public School (N.S.W.)

Inspired by discussions of new approaches to teaching, Mathew and Maher (1978) combined their Year 6 classes, obtained the use of an old assembly hall and set out to try to discover a successful way to combine the traditional with the "open-plan" progressive approach.

The hall was divided into learning areas for maths, reading, craft/art, and group recording, with a central portion left open for whole-group meetings.

The children were put into ability groups for the basic skill areas, and a small school classroom approach was adopted where some groups were given drill, others worked to contract, and both teachers were actively involved in teaching, supervision or giving individual attention to the remedial group. Teaming also aids the learning of basic subjects because the teachers can exchange different techniques and skills.

Contracts are planned and distributed every Friday. The contract and theme approaches help integrate activities in Social Science, and expressive areas of the curriculum, and allow for a great deal of individualised research and selection of learning activities.

The "Square Deal" classroom, according to Mathew and Maher, stimulates bright pupils to extend their work output, motivates the below average pupils to participate in groups, develops self-confidence, affords easy access to use of equipment and materials and encourages co-operation.

Team teaching makes it easier to solve problems, allows teachers to learn from each other, motivates teachers to keep improving their program, relaxes the student-teacher relationship and gives teachers more time to prepare, mark, and record work as they can focus attention on one facet of follow-up.

D. Ferny Grove Primary School (Queensland)

Two teachers who had structured their "egg-crate" classrooms in the manner of the newer flexible-space concepts applied to team teach in the new two-teacher modular unit being built at their school.

The team was sensitive to impressions in the community that children in open classrooms are just "playing around", and planned open days and parent discussions to explain and justify their approach to teaching. Children were also included as co-planners and evaluators. Many schemes were trialled, evaluated, and discarded. The over-riding use of themes, for example, was discarded because integration in many areas seemed forced and artificial.

The team uses a timetable, but considers it flexible: "We feel no need to adhere strictly to a maths program in the mornings, for example" (Kaminski, 1978, p. 21).

The teachers were particularly impressed with the variety of teaching methods (which go hand-in-hand with grouping arrangements) available to them. In many situations, such as introducing a new topic, direct teaching to the whole group occupies one teacher while the other assists in the background. This seems the most efficient and effective approach. Revision often works best with a two-thirds/one-third split (the one-third needing more individualised help). On other occasions six friendship groups may be formed, rotating from one activity area to another. Each teacher is responsible for the planning and development of three of these, but, as they are more or less self-directed, teachers act as floating facilitators during this part of the day. Finally, the group spends part of its time divided evenly between its "home-room" teachers (Kaminski, 1978).

Case studies of current practices

A. Bray Park Primary School (Queensland), Year 6

Carol S. and Carole K. didn't know each other before they started to teach together at the beginning of this year. They began slowly, teaching at either end of a double area classroom, but soon noticed they were in many instances teaching the same thing.

> In the beginning we didn't tend to bring them together as much as we do now because I was just beginning to get the feel of it (one teacher had only had experience in a traditional single-teacher classroom), but we seemed to be repeating ourselves. It got ridiculous.

As they felt quite compatible and agreed that repeating the same thing at each end of the room was pointless, teaming began in a serious way.

The children have responded well to the changes, love being in the classroom and are allowed to use it whenever the teachers are there.

8.30 a.m. Small groups are busily occupied in different parts of the room. Some girls are drawing on a portable chalkboard, boys are practising for a poetry reading, someone hurriedly leafing through a book, a group working at the sink, and so forth. They are all preparing for the morning session—presentation of a poem of their choice. The reader of the poem can select friends to help illustrate the poem as it is being recited.

9.00 a.m. School starts. Everyone lines up outside, walks in and sits in a large open carpeted space in the middle of the classroom. The show begins. After three or four presentations, high interest, applause, and some constructive criticism, the children move to desks at either side of the classroom, ready for maths.

Working groups vary throughout the day. One teacher leads, and the other supports, for mental arithmetic and number facts, spelling, introduction to social studies and science topics etc. Two ability groups are formed for maths, meeting at each end of the room. The children sit at individual desks facing the blackboards, an arrangement supportive of the direct teaching methods used for maths lessons.

Language groups are of mixed ability, and five ability groups are formed for reading. This means at any given time two groups are with teachers and three groups are working independently and co-operatively. Friendship pairs are formed for social studies projects, and small experiment groups take turns demonstrating science topics to the whole class.

The teachers emphasise that *they* are a team and the *children and they* are a *team*. They do not see half the class as their own group. Each teacher relates to the whole class.

> The children seem to really like being one class. They say, "Oh, it's really good, we've got two teachers. We don't have just one anymore". We were careful from the very beginning not to let them play one of us off against the other. So right from the word go, we always checked with each other, "Did so and so ask you that already?".

This team shares teaching in all subject areas, but trades groups regularly. It meets every morning for planning.

> There are so many things going on. You plan something, say, three days ahead and then something else pops up, so we'd rather plan once a day. We both get here before 8.

Carole and Carol agree that it's really good to have another person around to relieve the tension if something is bothering one of them.

> Having another person around keeps you on top of things; you know, we can look at each other and have a bit of a giggle. You can be reaching the breaking point, and look at the other person, and feel, well, relieved, because there's someone else there who understands. It keeps the whole room a bit more positive.

They also feel that one person can do a lot of organising for two. Their way of team teaching saves a lot of time; the workload is much less, which gives them more time to work with individual children.

Are there any disadvantages?

> Occasionally you'd like your own little group. You'd like to do your own thing; you know, go outside or something. That atmosphere, and it's quiet. You know you can have that personal touch with just your own children.

B. Bray Park Primary School, Year 2

An advantage of team teaching already mentioned is the smooth induction of first year teachers. Miya and Leanne work with their own classes for maths, reading, and language, because it is Leanne's first year of teaching, and "She's rarin to go! She's got so many ideas from college that she wants to try out. She wants to try things and see how they go. Ideas that don't always work for me, so we don't team teach all day".

The groups do work together for morning session, social studies, and science. Three groups are formed for science learning experiences, as one of the specialist teachers at the school works with the team during that period. This school has two teachers in a special unit on the school grounds. The policy is one of full integration of the handicapped child, so the special teachers work with a number of teams in ordinary classrooms.

Even though much of the teaching is separate in this double unit, the teachers are quite compatible and take advantage of shared space and many shared lessons, as mentioned above.

The teachers enjoy bouncing ideas off each other, and feel their enthusiasm is at a higher level throughout the year. They think a larger group is good for the children: "There is a bigger group to mix with. Children in a smaller group get too used to each other". Of course, more children mean more parents to call on and many of them work with small groups.

Leanne appreciates being with an experienced teacher, who helps her get used to all the administrative and organisational responsibilities that a teacher has in a large school.

Are you interested?

Miller (1981), in an attempt to develop an instrument to measure receptivity to educational change amongst primary school teachers, chose five functional areas within which to explore attitudes of teachers. One of the areas was team teaching, which was defined as:

> . . . groups of teachers taking joint responsibility for the instruction of a segment of the school population. Team teaching usually has the following elements: recognition and utilisation of individual teacher abilities; student grouping for special purposes; flexible daily programs; use of space and media appropriate to the purpose and content of learning activities (p. 110).

Not all of the items below are helpful in measuring receptivity to educational change, so an "answer key" is not provided, and some changes have been made to the original items.

However, you may find discussing or thinking about these questions with a potential team partner a good way to work out your attitudes toward such a venture.

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT have to be easy-to-see, accessible, and located where they will be used. Take the doors off the cupboards, label and diagram where things belong.

GROUPING is so much easier in a team. Ability groups are larger and more homogeneous; the work in planning learning centres can be divided in half. Small group work is much more feasible. Give yourselves a break. Take advantage of whole-class instructions whenever you can. As you're not *always* the one who's teaching, you have some extra time, energy, and leftover imagination to plan more interesting presentations.

ATTITUDES TO TEAM TEACHING

Rate each on a scale of five: SA (strongly agree), A (agree), U (undecided), D (disagree), or SD (strongly disagree).

1. SA A U D SD I lack enough information about team teaching to make a decision for or against it.
2. SA A U D SD I think team teaching would provide the best instruction collectively possible.
3. SA A U D SD My time is too limited to explore the possibilities of team teaching.
4. SA A U D SD I am afraid that team teaching may encourage teachers to avoid improvement in their areas of weakness.
5. SA A U D SD Combined with the ideas on a teaching team, my teaching would be more effective.
6. SA A U D SD I plan to remain largely responsible for the instruction of my particular class.
7. SA A U D SD As part of a teaching team, I could spend more time developing creativity, responsibility and habits of inquiry in students.
8. SA A U D SD Team teaching may stifle my creativity in the classroom.
9. SA A U D SD I believe the child benefits more when team teaching is used.
10. SA A U D SD Use of team teaching would allow me to put more varied content into my lessons.
11. SA A U D SD I believe there is an opportunity for teachers ''not to pull their weight'' in team teaching situations.
12. SA A U D SD I can function as well as a member of a teaching team as I can teaching alone.
13. SA A U D SD I would find it very difficult to co-ordinate my teaching with other teachers.
14. SA A U D SD Team teachers with different philosophies than mine would confuse students.
15. SA A U D SD I try to use the best skills of people who can contribute to the learning of my students.
16. SA A U D SD Team teaching would allow me to capitalise on my special interests and abilities.
17. SA A U D SD I imagine team teaching would enhance the professional growth of team members.
18. SA A U D SD I'm not sure I'd like another staff member present while I am teaching.
19. SA A U D SD I think that variety in teaching personalities on a teaching team would increase pupil learning.

A PARTNER is someone to fall back on, plan with, laugh with, work out problems with; someone you hope can relate to those children you can't figure out; to give you confidence, stretch your imagination—and, if you're lucky, to teach your "least favourite" subject. You don't have to be best of friends, but you do have to enjoy your working day.

TEAM MEETINGS at least once a week (and not rushed) are essential. Develop a pattern for discussion, include a time to talk about high points and low points, plans that didn't work, spontaneous learnings, toy with new directions; then plan the next week and take care of pressing matters.

Occasionally, plan a meeting with other team teachers. Have each person list and share two or three "best" ideas. Arrange to trade partners for a day to see how another organisational plan works.

TEAMING WITH SPECIALISTS is another way to take advantage of team teaching concepts. Instead of marking (and isolating) children by having them withdrawn from the classroom, plan with the specialist to introduce skills to small mixed groups in the classroom setting, and on topics or themes that are part of your overall planning. Capitalise on the contributions to the learning program that the teacher-librarian can make.

PARENTS (and other people) can help. Share your enthusiasms, plans and expectations of the benefits of teaming. Incorporate preparing notes to the home with learning activities. Could the children do a survey? What are the parents' hobbies, occupations, interests? Parents can share skills with the whole class or with small (rotating) groups. One exciting advantage of flexible afternoon timetables and part-time use of learning centres is the ease of incorporating the skills of outside people. There are ways to contact a broader community than simply parents of children who happen to be in your class—think of retirement groups, unemployment programs, a nearby high school. Teacher aides are also part of the team.

THE CHILDREN want to help. In the spirit of co-operation, give the children a chance to teach, and evaluate and plan. In asking them to teach each other, to offer their ideas about what and how to learn, to help arrange and decorate a learning centre, you are extending the concept of a team to everyone in the group.

Resources

Through My Eyes, Kilkenny (South Australian Film Corporation, 1975) is a splendid illustration of most of these concepts. If not available from your state library, order from the National Film Lending Library, Canberra.

Co-operative Teaching in Double Teaching Spaces (Queensland Department of Education, 1983) is a series of booklets, created by teachers and other educators. Each booklet addresses itself to some aspect of team teaching: *Co-operative Teaching—Towards a Definition*; *Co-operative Teaching in the School*; *Communication*; *Organising Time and Classroom Responsibility*; *Organising Resources*; *Organising the Children*; *Organising Space*; *Evaluation*.

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st of all
the youngest
goat Gruff
to cross the bridge
Trip, trap! Trip, trap!
went the bridge
"WHO'S THAT
tripping over my bridge?"
roared the Troll.

Learning Centres and Literacy Development

LEN UNSWORTH

This chapter focuses on the use of teacher-made learning centres as a means of fostering independent learning while at the same time providing stimulating "whole language" activities. The author begins by outlining the principles which underlie the effective classroom use of learning centres. He then presents a series of illustrated examples of learning centre activities designed by various teachers. The activities described are drawn specifically from infants classrooms, in order to demonstrate that this approach may be used at all stages of primary education. Means of developing pupils self-evaluation are suggested, and the chapter concludes with a survey of the advantages of this approach.

Learning centres designed by teachers specifically for their own pupils can greatly enhance the operation of "whole language" classrooms where children are engaged in meaningful learning experiences involving "real" books and writing for genuine communicative purposes. Learning centres which contribute to a stimulating learning environment in this way reflect the following principles:

- They are an INtegral part of the overall class program.
- They contain INteresting, INnovative activities.
- They provide for INdividual differences among children with respect to their language and literacy development and their learning styles.
- They foster INdependence in learning and encourage children to be self-directing in their approach to classroom tasks.
- They are sufficiently INformal to allow for co-operative learning within small groups.

Following further explication of these "IN . . ." principles of learning centres, the practicalities of classroom application will be discussed and illustrated with examples of centres constructed and used by teachers who have been post-graduate students at the Macarthur Institute of Higher Education, Milperra, N.S.W.

Integration

Learning centres are most effective when the activities they contain are derived from, and feed back into, the other experiences provided as part of the overall class program. But it is not sufficient that just the content, or topic, or concepts being dealt with are related to the overall program, there must also be a consistent philosophy of learning underlying the creation of learning tasks. In "whole language" classrooms this means that all learning experiences must be inherently meaningful. They are largely based on engaging children's interest in "real" books by encouraging meaningful interactions with the texts and providing opportunities for personally relevant responses by the children.

In these classrooms there is no place for learning centre activities of the "drill and practice" variety or the "skills based" kits with routine, "multiple guess" questions on workcards quite unrelated to any focus of meaningful classroom learning. Teacher-made learning activities provide the practice and consolidation needed by some children as well as opportunities for extension and teachers make this provision by capitalising on the natural appeal of the materials they have selected as most suited to the needs and interests of their pupils.

Interesting, innovative and individualised

All pupils should have the opportunity to work at the learning centre. They should all want to visit the centre! Efforts toward this objective of universal appeal can be greatly enhanced by the physical attractiveness of the centre, the novelty of its appearance, its location and the comfort of the furniture etc. Geoff Williams (1985) described a program based on *The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe* (Lewis, 1950), in which an old, second-hand, backless wardrobe was secured a few feet in front of the rear wall of the classroom. This was the basis of a centre which recreated the setting of the book through use of the children's own artwork etc. In another classroom where the theme was "space travel" a silver foil covered, hemispherical, cardboard dome about 1.5 metres in diameter was attached to a hook in one corner of the ceiling. This dome was lowered by a string to about thirty centimetres above the heads of each group of pupils when it was their turn to retreat to this "Zone of Silence". These centres were attractive not simply because they were an isolated novelty but rather because they formed part of the total atmosphere of the room. Many teachers have made use of old car seats, bean bags etc. to enhance the comfort and attraction of their centres but it is the unusual and unexpected characteristics of the centres that delight children.

Learning centres must also offer children learning modes which they see as new and different from what they normally experience as part of classroom life. This means that innovative use of audio-visual equipment is essential. It is useful to have access to computers, slide/tape and filmstrip machines etc. but much can be done with a listening post and the imaginative use of a simple audio cassette player. Now that meaningless phonic drills and sight word repetitions have been abandoned, the language master can be recycled and used to provide access to interesting tasks for pupils who have difficulty with reading e.g. crossword clues on language master cards.

A lot of vegetables are grown in me.
Crossword Puzzle

As well as providing multi-media materials, learning centres also provide multi-level activities. This means that all children can undertake the same kind of learning experience but with varying levels of support according to their particular needs. The crossword clues on the language master is one example, but these cards can also be used to provide access to "cloze" learning tasks for pupils who would have difficulty with conventional print format. Further examples of the ways in which learning tasks can be differentiated according to pupil needs will be dealt with in the descriptions of sample learning centres. One must beware that the use of audio-visual equipment does not imply a predominantly passive role for the learner. For this reason the use of manipulative tasks and a variety of task types is important to maintain the active interest of all pupils.

Independent

One of the major goals for learning centres is to encourage children to be more self-directing in their learning. This implies the opportunity for children to negotiate objectives and to select from a range of tasks and materials. For this to occur the options available at the learning centre must be very clear. They should be discussed with the children and then clearly displayed for future reference. Children need to understand:

- what they can and should do
- how to do it
- when to do it
- where to work
- how and where to obtain materials
- what they should do with completed work
- what they should do when their work is completed
- how they participate in the evaluation process.

Before the learning centre begins actual operation, it is recommended that teachers organise a "rehearsal of procedures" for all pupils. Teachers should first of all explain the use of the centre to all pupils. Groups should then be allowed about five minutes at the centre to familiarise themselves with the layout, procedures etc. If necessary any remaining issues of concern can be clarified with the class. A scheduling device should indicate when particular pupils have access to the centre and all directions should be clearly displayed for the life of the centre.

With children choosing from a variety of tasks and completing them via different modes, it is important to keep accurate records of each child's progress. This task can be "built in" to the centre and undertaken largely by the children. However this must not degenerate into children's recording simply *what* they have finished. They must also be encouraged to reflect on their own learning behaviours and to provide feedback to the teacher about their perceptions of the interest and difficulty level of the activities. Furthermore, children must see that their participation in the evaluative process is significant to the teacher. This can be achieved through an evaluation conference which occurs with the teacher when the children are not occupied at the learning centre.

Informal

Learning centres are highly organised but they are not prescriptive. Within a detailed and systematic framework pupils are afforded a high degree of flexibility in the "how" and "when" and to some extent the "what" of their learning. Although simplified versions of some tasks are provided, less able pupils may choose to ignore these and undertake the more demanding versions with the help of their peers. Such co-operative learning is to be encouraged. Of course, teachers may feel that some pupils are not extending their learning adequately. In this case the appropriateness of pupil choices can be openly and positively discussed during evaluation conferences.

Although teachers are not intensively interacting with the children whilst they are at the centre, its success depends on how effectively teachers perform the following roles related to the use of the centre:

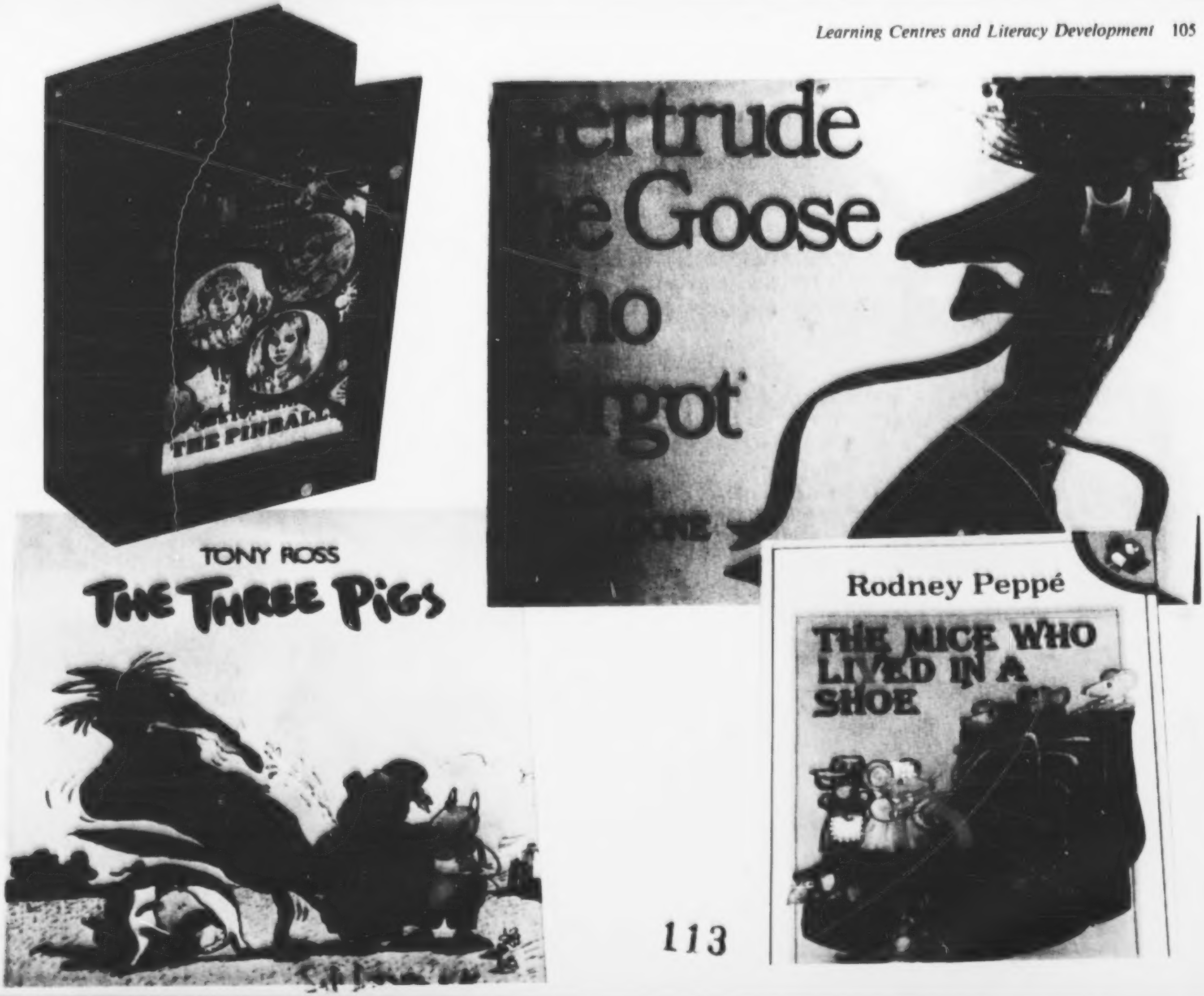
- *Creation* of an original, exciting and well organised set of meaningful activities suited to the individual needs of class members.
- *Introduction* of pupils to the centre so that they are all clear about what to do and how it is to be done.
- *Maintenance* of pupils' interest in the centre by referring to their progress and relating this to other class experiences.
- *Evaluation* of pupil outcomes—cognitive and affective—and hence of the appropriateness of the centre's activities.

Examples of learning centre activities

Although it is not possible to recreate adequately the classroom contexts in which these learning centres were used, it is hoped that the accompanying photographs will illustrate their essential features. To emphasise the practicality of a learning centre approach to teaching in the infant school, most of the examples are from learning centres designed for year one children. The discussion focuses on a centre dealing with "The Pirate" and created by Ms. Robyn Baigent from St. Andrew's Public School near Campbelltown, N.S.W. Additional illustrations are drawn from the following learning centres for year one children:

- *The Mice Who Lived In A Shoe* (Peppe, 1984)
  by Ms. Dianna Darlington, St. Peter's Anglican Primary School, Campbelltown, N.S.W.
- *Gertrude the Goose Who Forgot* (Galdone and Galdone, 1975)
  by Ms. Maria Commisso, St. Gertrude's Primary School, Smithfield, N.S.W.
- *The Three Pigs* (Ross, 1983)
  by Ms. Pauline Savidge, Lansvale Public School, N.S.W.

The principles illustrated by these centres apply equally to centres for older children. This is demonstrated by brief references to a learning centre on *The Pinballs* (Byars, 1977) created by Ms. Susan Gaynor from Miller Public School, near Liverpool, N.S.W.


THE PINBALL
ertrude
e Goose
no
rgot
TONY ROSS
THE THREE PIGS
Rodney Peppé
THE MICE WHO LIVED IN A SHOE

Visual appeal

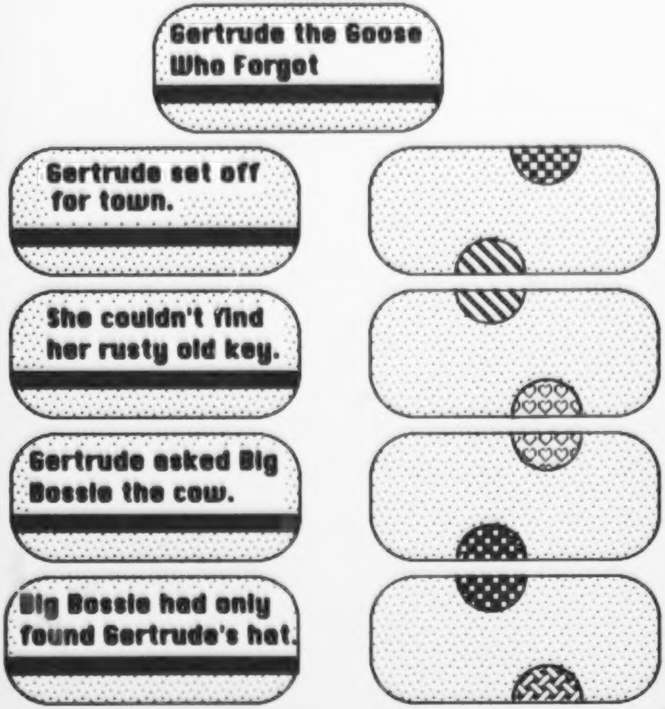
The pirate centre material was contained in a study treasure chest. As well as being attractive to look at, the children liked the idea of getting their work out of the treasure chest. A similar presentation was used by Ms. Jenny Kalgovas (Ambarvale Public School, Campbelltown, N.S.W.) who created a learning centre for her year one class on the theme of birthdays. The centre was packaged as a birthday "present" which the children liked to open in order to collect their activities. A more elaborate format was the "Mouse House" which contained activities derived from the Rodney Peppe story.

Integration with class program

All of the centres were based on real books used in the class reading program. The "Pirate" was based on the theme from the Mt. Gravatt Developmental Language Reading Program Level 1 (Addison Wesley, 1977), but the centre nevertheless was not restricted to "reading scheme" books and "Captain Pugwash" (Ryan, 1957) was just one of the additional resources used.

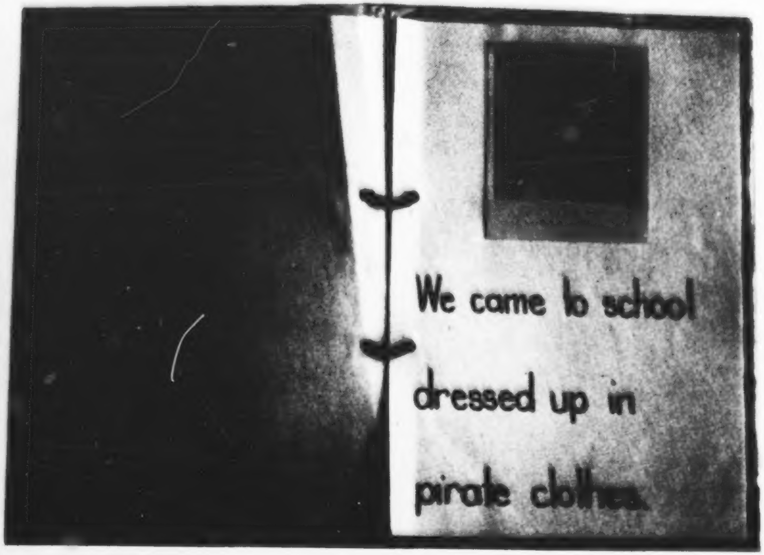
CAPTAIN
PUGWASH

The books had been previously read aloud to the class by the teacher and then the taped versions became part of the learning centres for "read along" purposes. Variations to the usual "read along" procedure can assist in maintaining pupils' active interest in a story which they have heard before. For example, with "Gertrude . . ." the teacher put the overhead projector on the floor near the listening post and provided the children with silhouettes of the main characters so that the children could animate the story with shadow figures as they followed the text.


Gertrude the Goose Who Forgot
Gertrude set off for town.
She couldn't find her rusty old key.
Gertrude asked Big Bossie the cow.
Big Bossie had only found Gertrude's hat.

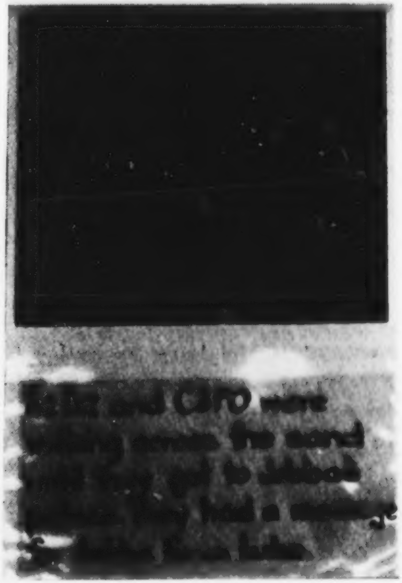
Stories read in class can be revisited and the children's comprehension consolidated by use of "language master" activities. In the case of "The Three Pigs", the children were given a pack of illustrated language master cards which they were required to sequence and then listen to through the language master to check whether they were sequenced correctly. A similar but more demanding task was set up for the "Gertrude" story. A pack of language master cards contained a precis of the story which the children had to sequence. They then listened to the order of their version on the language master to decide whether any rearrangement was necessary. The compatibility of the small symbols on the reverse side of the cards allowed the teacher (or supervising parent or aide) to see quickly how successful the children were. Many teachers find commercially produced stamps useful for this purpose.

Another example of class work which can be consolidated through the learning centre is the children's "language experience" texts. The children's pirate day was recorded with photographs in the "I B Pirate Book". Pupils also enjoyed reliving their pirate day through an accompanying listening-post tape of their class book.



With minor modification to the format of the original language experience books, several additional learning experiences can be generated. In this language experience book, based on *Green Eggs and Ham* (Seuss, 1962), the photographs have been inserted using "corners" and the text is inserted in plastic sleeves. Following the original formulation of the text, children can be asked to carry out several tasks. All the photographs can be removed and pupils asked to replace them. Similarly the text cards only, can be removed. The task is to replace them appropriately. The text cards can be cut into smaller units and given to children to replace (as shown here). Following this, some word cards can be deleted and children supplied with blank cards to produce replacements for the missing words. Various combinations of these tasks are also possible. They are suitable as part of a learning centre and link the centre activities to previous class work.

The same principle can be applied to other topics with older children as illustrated in the pupils' "Star Wars" texts. The plastic sleeves allow the texts to be removed and then replaced appropriately by children. The texts can be cut up and children asked to reconstruct them and paste them on a new card. Blue tac can be used to cover selected words with blank cards and children can write the missing words on the plastic sleeve using water-based textas.



Class work on the "pirate" included "picture talks" based on overhead transparencies of relevant illustrations from the *Captain Pugwash*. These were later included in the learning centre as part of an activity where children matched them to the appropriate text cards. The previous classroom work "primed" children for success on this learning centre task.

Another method of consolidating children's learning from stories read in class was by use of "sentence wheels". The "sentence wheels" for the "Gertrude" centre were positioned inside a model of her house so that when they were turned one word appeared in the window of the house to provide the "actor" in the sentence:

found Gertrude's

and turning the second wheel provided the object. Children had to turn both wheels until they had completed all the sentences consistent with the plot of the story. A similar technique was used with "sentence wheels" for the "Mouse House".

Learning centre activities can also include opportunities for children's writing about work covered in class. The year one children enjoyed writing their own responses to *The Mice Who Lived In A Shoe.* Older children enjoyed responding to aspects of *The Pinballs* and relating these to their own lives. For example, one learning centre task card read:

ACTIVITY 3

The Best Birthday Present I Ever Received

Directions

Remember when Carlie and Thomas J. gave Harvey a puppy for his birthday? He was so happy that he cried. You might like to write your own true story with a title such as "The Best Birthday Present I Ever Received".

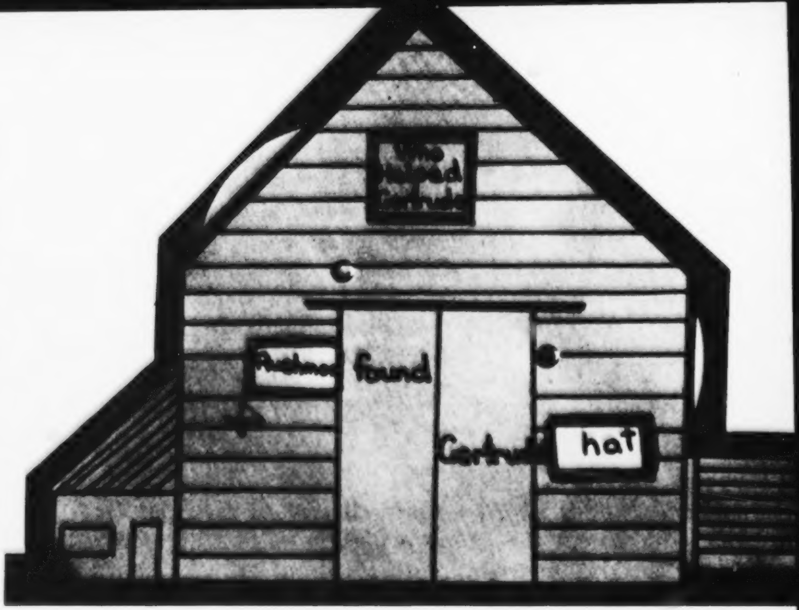
Some Helpful Hints

You might tell your reader:

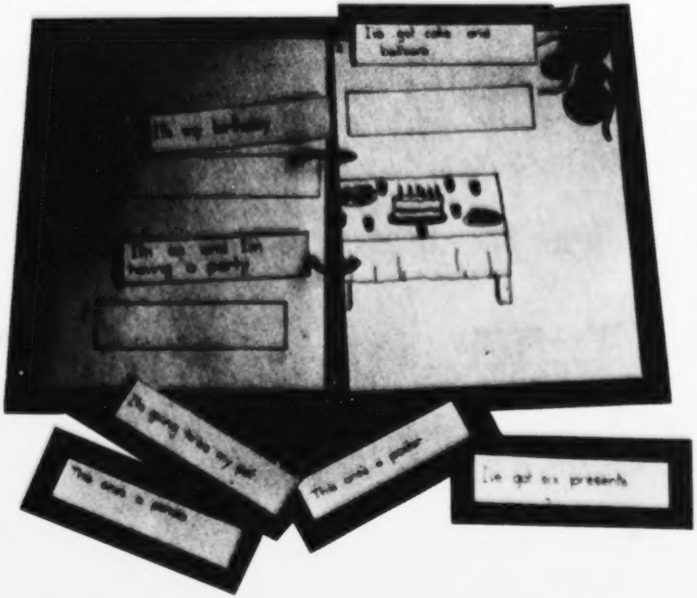
- On which birthday you received the present
- Who gave you the present
- Why you felt the present was so special.

Multi-level group and/or individual learning tasks

The "pirate" centre offered additional supporting cues to a cloze activity by providing miniature illustration discs as well as word discs to insert in the blank spaces. Children could use either or both to complete the passage, hence stimulating their use of context to construct meaning when unable to recognise the precise word required. By using this combination of discs children were even able to insert some words appropriately which they were not able to identify automatically. Of course, for some children the rhebus modification was not necessary at all.

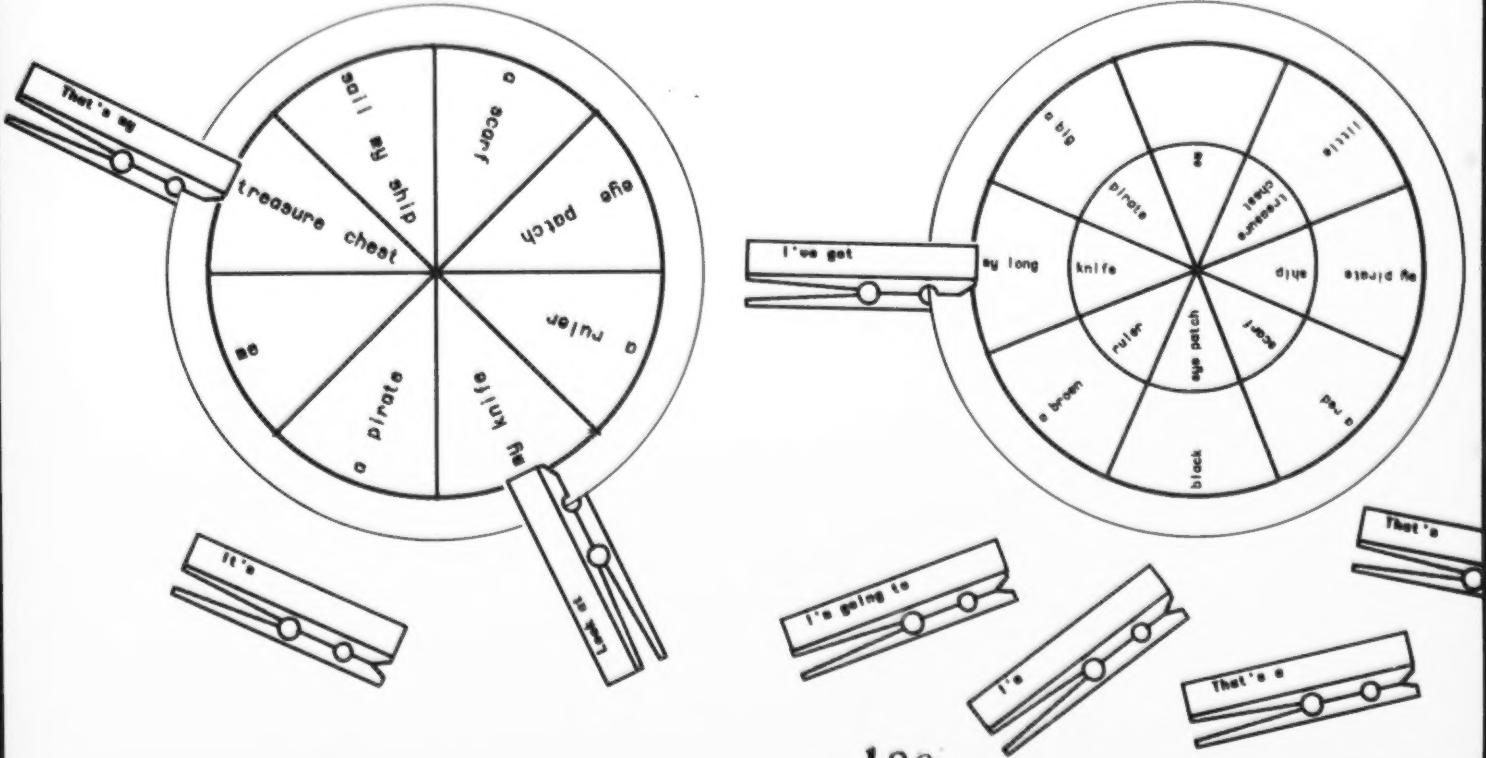


Differentiated cloze tasks were also used in the "Birthday" centre. In the easier version children were presented with meaningful sentences on cards to be positioned in an attractively constructed booklet about "The Birthday Party" with very clear picture cues. In the second version a similar booklet also contained most of the text but with a single word deleted in each sentence. This time children were required to locate individual word cards correctly within the clozed text. The constructed book had each page covered with contact so the children could also complete the tasks using water-based textas instead of sentence and word cards.

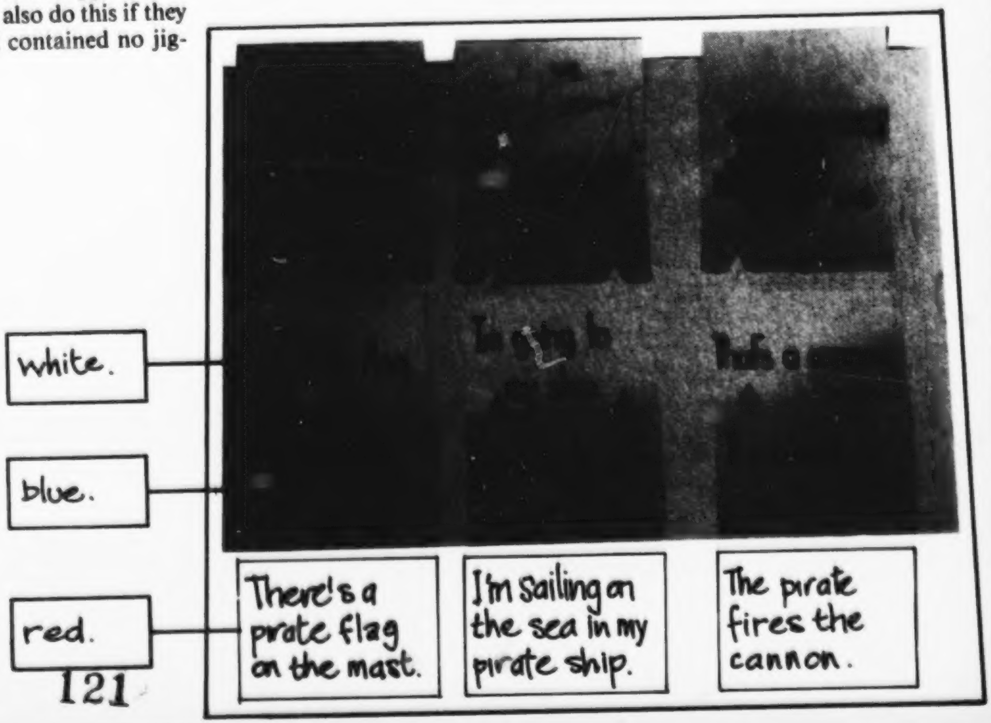


Learning Centre
Activity 2

Another novel format for cloze tasks is known as "peg it" cloze. In the "pirate" centre this was set up at two levels of difficulty. At the first level pupils were provided with a circular piece of cardboard from the centre of which radiated various "content units" relevant to the theme e.g. "a pirate", "treasure chest" etc. The teacher had printed common "signalling units" (e.g. "I'm", "That's a", "It's") on wooden clothes pegs which the pupils had to attach to the outside of the card in the appropriate location. The more difficult version had two circular pieces of card. One was about half the diameter of the other and they were attached at the centre. Radiating from the centre of the smaller circle were, once again, relevant content units but around the edge of the larger circular piece of card were "elaborating units" e.g. "sharp", "long", "black" etc. Pupils first had to rotate the circles to align these elaborating units with appropriate content units (e.g. "sharp" + "knife") and then use the pegs to attach the appropriate signalling unit to the circumference e.g. "That's a" + "sharp" + "knife". The "peg it" cloze technique was also used in the "Mouse House" centre.


That's my
treasure chest
my ship
sail
a scarf
my eye patch
a ruler
my knife
a pirate
me
Look at
It's
I've got
a big
little
my pirate
a red
black
a brown
my long
me
treasure chest
ship
scarf
eye patch
ruler
knife
pirate
I'm going to
I'm
That's a
That's

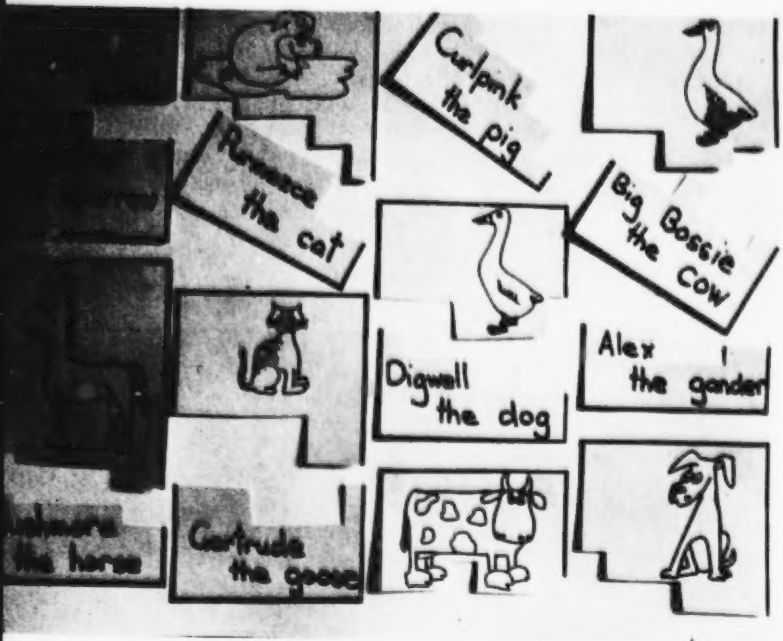
“Jig-saw Stories” are a means of providing additional cues in text and picture-matching tasks so that success is guaranteed for less able pupils and their text comprehension is further stimulated. In the “pirate” centre pupils had to match pictures with texts and they could choose from texts at three levels of sophistication. The texts on white card were the simplest. These sentences consisted of signalling units and content units. The texts on blue card contained additional “elaborating” units while the most sophisticated texts on the red card contained combinations of elaborating units. If pupils chose the white card they could correctly match each of the texts to the appropriate picture by using the jig-saw cues. They could also do this if they chose to use the blue card but the red card contained no jig-saw cues. Of course children are not precluded from using combinations of coloured cards to match the pictures and text and complete the story. Children who are able to use some of the red cards but are not confident with all of them could complete the story with simpler cards and in the process clarify their understanding of the remaining red cards. The jig-saw idea was also used in the “Gertrude” and “The Three Pigs” learning centres.



There's a pirate flag on the mast.

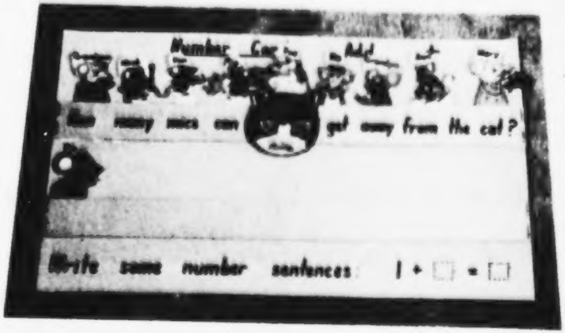
I'm sailing on the sea in my pirate ship.

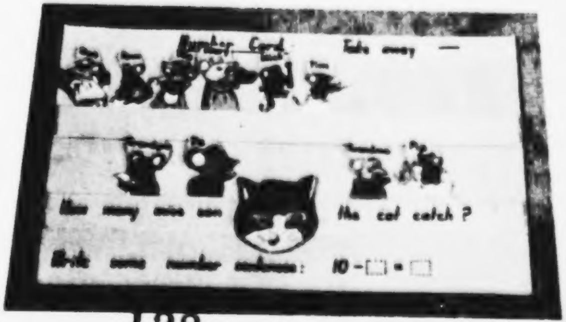
The pirate fires the cannon.


Curlpink the pig
the cat
Big Bossie the cow
Alex the gander
Digwell the dog
Gertrude the goose
the horse

Learning centres and literacy across the curriculum

Language centres often provide opportunities for extension into other curriculum areas. The "Mouse House" centre capitalised on the opportunity to reinforce simple addition and subtraction concepts with the year one children. Two number cards were constructed. Cut-out figures of the mice who lived in the shoe "stood" behind a simple, narrow cardboard "pocket" at the top of each card. Underneath this was a picture of the cat. On the addition card this picture was accompanied by the sentence: "How many mice can get away from the cat?" Below this was a picture of "Pa" mouse and another cardboard sleeve for all who could join him. The children selected whichever members of the family they wanted to join Pa and moved them down beside him. They then completed the number sentence: 1 + ☐ = ☐. On the subtraction card the question was: "How many mice can the cat catch?" The children moved the victims from the top "pocket" to the cat's pocket and completed the number sentence: 10 – ☐ = ☐.


Number Card Add
How many mice can get away from the cat?
Write some number sentences: 1 + ☐ = ☐


Number Card Take away —
How many mice can the cat catch?
Write some number sentences: 10 – ☐ = ☐

"The Pinballs" learning centre also provided the opportunity for independent research. in this story Harvey has two broken legs and the Benson twins have broken hips. Pupils investigated the formation and function of the bones of the human body.

"What do I do when I'm finished?"

Learning centres should always contain activities which children can go to when they have completed the work undertaken for a particular session. One of the best resources is an abundant supply of additional books related to the focus of the centre. For example, the following were just some of the books which accompanied the "Mouse House":

The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse, illust. by Rene Cloke, Award Publications Ltd., London, 1982.
The Mouse and the Egg, by William Mayne, Julia McRae Books, London, 1980.
Mouse Trouble, by John Yeoman and Quentin Blake, Picture Puffins, Ringwood, Victoria, 1972.
Molly Mouse Goes Shopping, by Carl Koelling, William Collins, Sydney, 1979.
The Kettleship Pirates, by Rodney Peppe, Picture Puffins, Ringwood, Victoria, 1985.
Tim Mouse, by Judy Brook, World's Work Ltd., London, 1982.
The Magnificent Morris Mouse Clubhouse, by Gail Gibbons, Franklin Watts, New York, 1981.
A Number of Mice, by Helen Craig, Aurum Press, London, 1978.
Cats and Mice, by Rita Golden Gelman, Scholastic Book Services, New York, 1978.
Little Mouse on the Prairie, by Stephen Cosgrove, Price Stern Sloan, Los Angeles, 1980.

"The Three Pigs" centre included a board and dice game based on the story, designed for small group use.

The board was clearly marked into 80 numbered squares. On about every eighth square, players would encounter directions

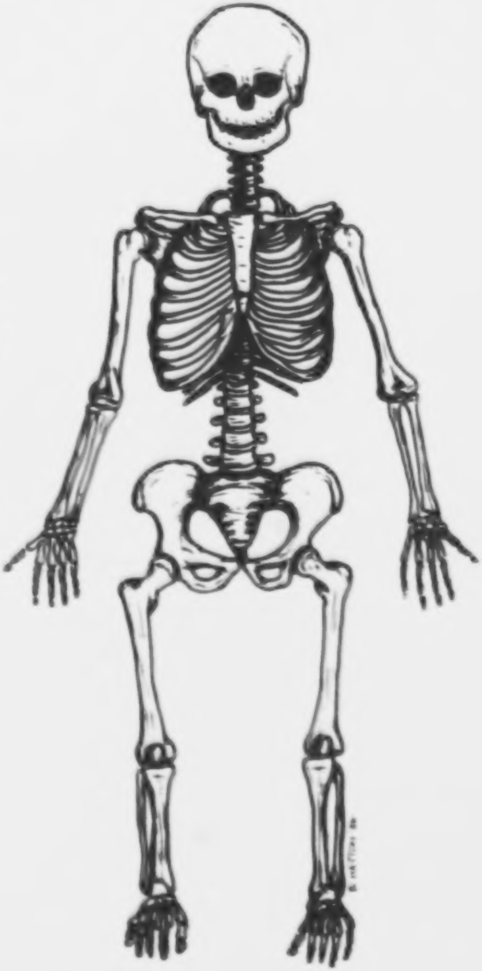
ACTIVITY 5

BROKEN BONES

Directions

In "the Pinballs" by Betsy Byars, Harvey has two broken legs and the Benson twins have broken hips.

* Find out about bones, what they are made of and their job as part of the human body.



based on the story, highlighted by miniature illustrations from the story. Here are some examples of those squares:

Oh, no, the
wolf! Miss
a turn.

Now you have
some sticks
to build a house.
Go on four
squares.

The wolf is
outside again.
Stay inside
and miss a
turn.

Congratulations!
You arrived home
before the wolf!
Go ahead one
square.

You meet
a man with
some bricks.
Go on two
spaces.

Such board games are easily constructed, and older children very quickly learn to apply the teacher's model in constructing their own games, complete with "Chance" cards containing information relevant to a current classroom theme.

"The Pinballs" centre invited pupils to construct their own pinball machine from reverse garbage. Instructions were given for the construction of a game using polystyrene, paddle pop sticks and marbles.

Another good idea is the provision of a bench top and pinboard at the rear of the room where children are invited to display their completed work. As well as displaying their own work, children enjoy looking at the work of their peers.

Pupils' self-evaluation

If children are to be encouraged to maintain responsibility for their own learning at school, they must learn to negotiate responsibly what is to be learned and how and when it is to be done. This means that as well as being offered some choice among objectives and materials, they must also be encouraged to express their views on the effectiveness of the learning experiences they undertake. Negotiation of the curriculum in this way will enhance pupils' commitment to learning and they should be initiated into this kind of participation from the beginning of their school lives in the infant school.

Teachers will find that pupils can give very useful feedback through three main aspects of self-evaluation in relation to learning centre activities:

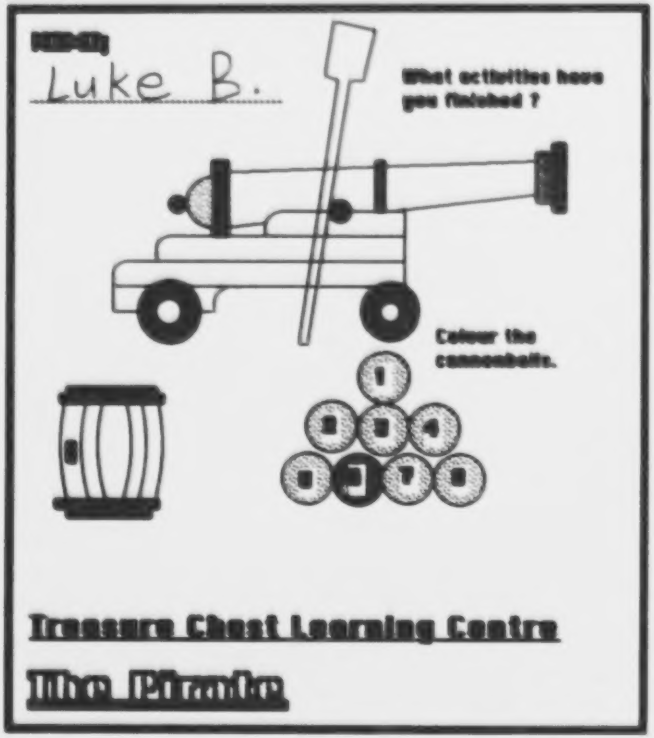
1. What did I learn?
2. How well did I do it?
3. How did I feel about what I did?

The first aspect is probably the one with which teachers (and pupils!) are most familiar. When children record this themselves in learning centres the format must be novel and maintain the interest of the centre's activities. In the "pirate" centre the year one children's record sheet pictured a pirate standing beside his cannon with a pile of cannon balls. The children coloured in the appropriate cannon ball (and the rest of the picture!) when they had completed the various activities.

Another evaluation sheet was provided in which the children recorded each day which activity they had done and how they felt about it.

A similar approach was taken with the year one children who used the "Birthday" learning centre.

A learning centre about "Air Travel" was devised by John Boland for year four pupils at Liverpool Public School, N.S.W. Part of the children's self-evaluation at this centre involved the maintenance of a "Flight Log" which recorded what tasks the children had completed and their perceptions of how they had performed.



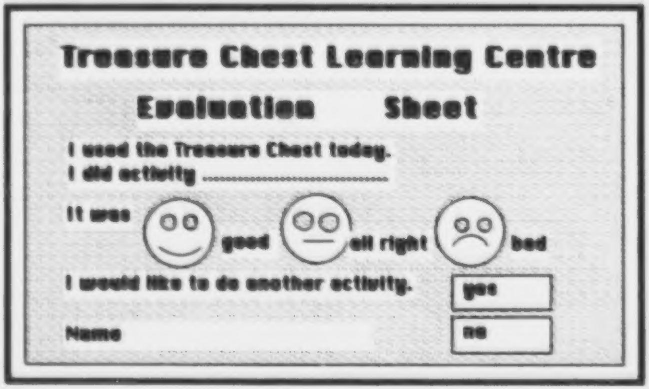
Luke B.

What activities have you finished ?

Colour the cannonballs.

Treasure Chest Learning Centre

The Pirate



Treasure Chest Learning Centre

Evaluation Sheet

I used the Treasure Chest today.
I did activity ....

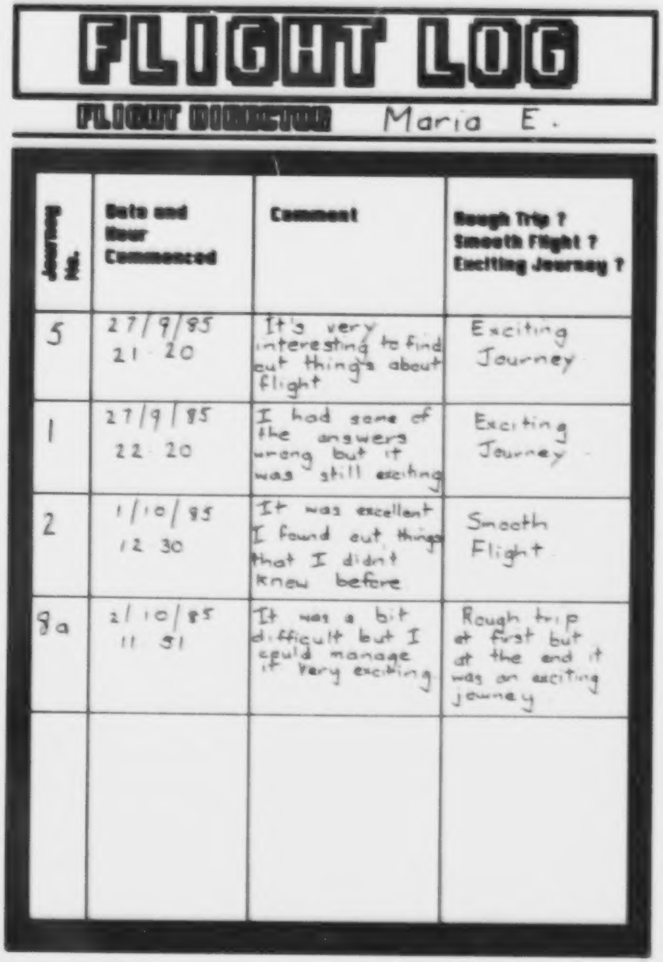
It was good all right bad

I would like to do another activity. ☐ yes ☐ no

Name

Advantages of teacher-made learning centres

- They respond immediately and specifically to the observed needs and interests of the children.
- They reflect the teacher's up-to-date understanding of the processes of literacy development and implications for the classroom.
- They allow the teacher to determine an appropriate, individual diet of traditional and modern children's literature, informational prose, environmental print etc.
- Format variations and original presentation maintain pupil interest in theoretically sound teaching strategies.
- They facilitate the integration of a range of materials (perhaps over several curriculum areas) from diverse and multi-media sources, around teacher/pupil-negotiated learning experiences.
- They provide self-directing and (semi) self-evaluating learning experiences which avoid the mechanical, multiple choice, or repetitious approach of much commercially produced material.
- They provide a model of the kinds of learning processes and products which are valued in the classroom.
- They allow instructions and other stimulus materials to be personalised through inclusion of individual student's names, reference to their interests, home, friends, school acquaintances and activities.



FLIGHT LOG

FLIGHT DIRECTOR Maria E.

Journey No.	Date and Hour Commenced	Comment	Rough Trip ? Smooth Flight ? Exciting Journey ?
5	27/9/85 21 20	It's very interesting to find out thing's about flight	Exciting Journey
1	27/9/85 22 20	I had some of the answers wrong but it was still exciting	Exciting Journey
2	1/10/85 12 30	It was excellent I found out things that I didn't knew before	Smooth Flight
8a	2/10/85 11 51	It was a bit difficult but I could manage it very exciting.	Rough trip at first but at the end it was an exciting journey

Economising on preparation time

A review of the examples from the learning centres illustrated in this chapter indicates guidelines for the economical investment of preparation time in teacher-made materials.

- Work done initially for one group of children should be in a format which allows them or other children later to engage in the same (or a variation or extension of the same) task again.
- A range of techniques should be used to ensure the reusability of learning materials so that endless duplication is avoided. For example:
  - —materials in plastic cover; pupils write on with water-based textas.
  - —use of pupil track/teacher track language master and cards with clear contact strip placed on cards.
- Learning tasks should be constructed in a flexible format which allows it to be changed in order to present an extension of variation of the task without destroying or consuming the initial materials. For example language experience stories in plastic sleeves with interchangeable pictures and text cards allows:
  - —initial writing and reading of the story;
  - —jumbling then resorting of texts and pictures;
  - —cutting up and re-assembly of texts;
  - —removal of some text segments and the writing of alternatives.

The basic framework of many learning centres can be reused with different groups of children, although resources and learning tasks will clearly need modification according to the needs of the new group. Learning centres are a means of fostering more co-operative teaching so that where possible teachers work together in the preparation of learning centres and then share resources across classrooms.

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Some of the photographs of learning centre materials submitted for this chapter were not of reproducible quality. Therefore a number of teacher-drawn activities and evaluation sheets have been redrawn on the Macintosh Macdraft computer program. Teachers with an interest in computers may wish to experiment with various graphics programs themselves. For those with access to the Macintosh, Macpaint and Macdraw are other suitable programs. PETA wishes to thank Mr. George Wilkie for his assistance in the production of graphics for this chapter.

Index

Attention span, 7

Baigent, Robyn, 104
Baxter, V., 39, 46
Big Orange, The, 35
Bi-lingual education, 91-92
Blair, Judi, 59
Boland, John, 116
Broadby, F., 88, 98
Brown, Hazel, 20-30
Butler, Andrea, 45
Byars, Betsy, 104, 119

Cambourne, Brian, 22-23, 30, 32, 46
Cameron, June, 90, 98
Captain Pugwash, 106, 109, 119
Classroom, arrangement of, 29
Classroom climate, 9
Classroom, social . . . organisation, 3
Cloze tasks, 110-112
Commisso, Maria 104
Contracting, 4, 11-12, 44, 49-64
  advantages of, 11, 58
  disadvantages of, 12, 60
  with groups, 11
Cooper, Peter, 65-76
Co-operative learning, 10, 23, 31, 44-45, 66-68

Dalton Plan, 50-51
Darlington, Dianna, 104
Davies, Brian, 65-76
Deere, Gary, 92, 98

Fairy tales, 37-44
Fleet, Alma, 49-64, 52, 55, 64

Galdone, J. and Paul, 104, 119
Gaynor, Susan, 104
Gertrude the Goose Who Forgot, 104-105, 119

Graham, Beth, 91-92, 98
Graves, Donald, 32, 47, 79
Green Eggs and Ham, 108
Grouping, 4, 31-47, 92-93, 94-97
  principles of, 44
  ability, problems of, 33-35
  'group then regroup' strategy, 35-36, 43
  rotation of, 37, 94
  sample schedule for, 41-44

Holderness, Jeremy, 65
Hudson, Graeme, 65

Individual Differences, 24, 32

Johnson, Terry, 38, 46

Kalgovas, Jenny, 106
Kanholtz, Carole, 94-96, 98
Kaplan S., 55, 64
Kemp, Max, 77-86, 81, 83
King, Vanessa, 59

Language master cards, 107
Laslett, Alan, 88, 99
Latham, Ross, 19, 40, 41, 47
Learning, independence in, 5, 9, 11, 17, 50, 103-104
  naturalistic, conditions of, 22-23
Learning centres, 19, 52, 101-119
  advantages of, 117
  guidelines for, 118
  principles underlying, 102-104
Learning rates, 9
Learning styles, 9
Literature, 23-26, 34, 104-116
Louis, Daphne, 38, 46

Mannison, Mary, 87-100
Martin, L., 55, 64

Materials, organisation of, 21-30
Matthews, Cathie, 52, 63
Mice Who Lived in a Shoe, The, 104-105, 110, 119
Miller, I., 96-97, 99
Mt Gravatt Developmental Language Reading Program, 25, 35, 106
Murphy, Maxine, 45
Multiple path outline, 39-44

'Open-plan' classroom, 52, 87, 92-93
Oral reading, 40-43, 73

Parents, 4, 77-86, 98
  involvement in literacy education, 77-86
Parker, Richard, 35
Peer tutoring, 4, 65-76, 92
  advantages of, 69
  cross-age, 66
Peppe, Rodney, 104, 106, 119
Peterson, Richard, 64-76
Pinballs, The, 104, 110, 119
Plot profiles, 38, 41-44
Plowden Report, 2, 64, 78, 85
'Process/conference' writing, 28, 74, 76
Pupils self-evaluation, 116-117

Reading process, psycholinguistic theory of, 32, 80-81
Resource teaching, 79
Resources, 10, 23-26, 97
Rosenberg, Miya, 96, 98
Ross, Tony, 104, 119
Ryan, John, 106, 119

Savidge, Pauline, 104
Saxby, Maurice, 28, 30
Scriven, Carol, 94-96, 98
Seuss, Dr., 108
Shepherd, Wendy, 59
Sloan, Peter, 5-19, 40, 41, 47
Space, organisation of, 21-30, 52
Specialist teachers, 6, 90-92, 98
Steinle, John, 1-4
Stokes, Doreen, 55

Teacher-librarian, 92
Teaching style, 1-4, 9
Team teaching, 87-99
Text sequencing, 107-109
Three Pigs, The, 104-105, 119
Time, scheduling of, 5-19, 27-28
Timetabling, blocked, 14-19
Topp, Robyn, 65-76
Topp, Roger, 65-76
Towards a Reading-Writing Classroom, 45, 47
Turbill, Jan, 32, 45

Unsworth, Len, 31-48, 35, 47, 101-119
USSR, 10, 27

Warburton, Leanne, 96, 98
Whitehead, David, 5-19
Whole class activities, 10, 27-28

Young Australia Reading Materials, 39, 46

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130